BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08632 261 5

No. 7542.43

GIVEN BY

H. H. Beaman

H. H. Beaman

NOTES

ON

CHURCH POLITY:

By

G. ANDERSON,

PROFESSOR IN NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

Newton Centre, Mass., 1872.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL,

122 WASHINGTON STREET.

1872.

Lack R
35

NOTES

ON

7542.43

CHURCH POLITY:

BY

G. ANDERSON,

PROFESSOR IN NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

Newton Centre, Mass., 1872.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL,

122 WASHINGTON STREET.

1872.

N. E. Methodist Hist. Soc.
Dec 13. 1923.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

INTRODUCTION.

WHAT is Church Polity? The term polity is from πολιτεία, which designates, first, the relation of the citizen to the State, which relation involves his condition and rights; second, the life and business of a statesman, hence, government, administration; third, the condition of a State, the form of its government, hence Plato used it to designate a commonwealth; Aristotle and Xenophon to designate a republic. Church polity, then, is the form of government prescribed for a church.

Where shall we look for this prescribed polity? Certainly not to any denomination of Christians, for each sect would simply present its own peculiar form of government, and endeavor to justify it by tradition, reason or Scripture; not to the Apostolic Fathers, for, being uninspired, their teachings are fallible and unauthoritative. While their writings, to a considerable extent, harmonize with those of the Apostles, in some measure, they contradict both the Apostles and themselves. Much less shall we look for a true church polity in the writings of the Church Fathers, for their teachings are still more at variance with the Scriptures and with one another. There is only one reliable guide, viz., the New Testament. Whatever it teaches concerning the government of a church is ultimate and decisive. To this inspired authority we should appeal unhesitatingly, and so far as possible, freed from preconceived notions, seek to reach those conclusions to which its clear utterances legitimately lead us.

Nevertheless, the testimony of the Apostolic and Church Fathers is not worthless; while unauthoritative it often illustrates and confirms the teachings of the New Testament. In confirmation of our views of church polity, as taught in the New Testament, we shall

sometimes appeal to their writings. But so far as their teaching is contrary to the Scriptures it is without any value in determining a divinely appointed church government. To adduce it, in such a case, would be to exalt the word of an uninspired man to a level with that of an inspired.

Does the New Testament present to us a clearly defined church polity? This question, I trust, will be decisively answered in the following pages, but at this point, it can be said that it does, if the character of a church, its powers, ordinances, offices and officers, definitely presented in the Acts and Epistles, may be considered the essential features of a church government.

The question whether Christ, during his earthly ministry, established a church in its completeness, though sometimes ardently discussed, is of no practical importance. New Testament church polity was a gradual growth. Christ instituted a ministry and ordinances, promulgated law for the government of a church (Matt. xviii. 15–17), indicated the power of a church (Matt. xviii. 18); yet we find in his teachings and acts only the fundamental principles of church government, which were fully unfolded during the ministry of the Apostles. Baptism was not administered with its full formula until after the outpouring of the Spirit, and neither it nor the Lord's Supper could have been adequately apprehended, until after the passion and resurrection, which they symbolize. Only when the church became local did the full complement of its officers appear, or its full powers find exercise. In the Gospels we find its bud, in the Acts and Epistles the blossom and fruit.

There are three theories pertaining to the existence, authority and extent of New-Testament church polity: —

1. It is said that the polity of the apostolic churches is more or less clearly indicated in the New Testament; but it is denied that the churches throughout all time are required to conform to it. Planted in different ages and countries and under different civilizations, they are at liberty to choose such a form of government as they think best adapted to the circumstances. So Stillingfleet taught in his Irenicum, Hooker in his Ecclesiastical Polity, and Whately in his Kingdom of Christ (p. 213). Archbishop Bancroft (1588) was the first to declare that Episcopacy was divinely instituted.*

* See Hunt on Religious Thought in England, Vol. I. p. 86.

The Methodists of the present day maintain that no particular form of church polity is binding.* Their church, in everything which makes it distinctive, dates back only about a century and a half.

We reply that this theory is based on the assumption that we are not bound to follow the example of the Apostles; that their uniform procedure in the government of the churches does not constitute a law for us; that nothing is authoritative law unless it takes the form of direct and positive injunction. But the common law of England and the United States does not take that form; it is determined simply by cases decided in the courts. A bare preponderance of decisions in favor of any given principle constitutes law, which is as sacred and binding as any statute formally enacted by the Legislature and written in our codes. Now, the Christian's guide is the New Testament. By its decisions he is bound. We learn from it that inspired Apostles uniformly planted and governed the churches, in all essential particulars, in the same way. We have, in each church organized and instructed by them, a decision as to the principles by which Christian churches should be governed. We are not, however, left to determine these principles by a bare majority of decisions, for the decisions are all one way, thus increasing our certitude. These decisions of the Apostles, made known to us through their practices, constitute law as positive and binding as any injunction enforced with a "shalt" or a "shalt not."

While Hooker contends for the above theory, he nevertheless admits that "in the matter of external discipline, or regiment itself, we do not deny but there are some things whereto the church is bound till the world's end."† Again he affirms, "Touching the manner of governing in general, the precepts that Scripture setteth down are not few and *the examples many*, which it proposeth for all church governors, even in particularities, to follow."‡

Moreover, if we are at liberty to discard the general practice of the Apostles in reference to the government of the churches, we have already found an easy path to the ignoring of their example

* Stephen's Church Polity, Chap. I.
† Eccl. Pol. Book III. Chap. XI.
‡ Eccl. Pol. Book III. Chap. IV.

in reference to the ordinances; we are treading an inclined plane which ends in grave doubt as to whether their example is in any respect binding on us.

To affirm that we are not bound by the practices of the Apostles, on the ground that the churches established by them possessed a polity which is not adapted to the churches of subsequent ages, is to go beyond reason, since human nature and the work of the church are ever the same. No greater difficulties can confront modern churches than those with which the apostolic churches contended. If they, with their simple organization, triumphed, the churches of no age of the world demand for their work a different polity.

The advocates of the theory which we combat, betray a consciousness of its unsoundness, by virtually abandoning it in their discussions. They always seem anxious to show that in the main, at least, their respective denominations are following the example of the Apostles.

2. There are, on the other hand, those who teach that not only an exact pattern of every part of church polity is found in the New Testament, but also that nothing in church action is left to human judgment or discretion. As each curtain, hook, basin and pin, of the Jewish tabernacle were described, and the religious services of the priests and the people were accurately delineated in the Hebrew ritual, so with the same particularity all the minutiæ of church action are marked out in the New Testament, and men have no right to add anything to them or to subtract aught from them. Thus Carson says, "It is highly unreasonable to suppose that God would leave the smallest regulation to the discretion of men, seeing that it has been owing to this sentiment that the churches of Christ have been overwhelmed and lost under the heap of anti-Christian rubbish." * Cartwright, a professor of theology at Cambridge in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, said, "The word of God containeth the direction of all things pertaining to the church, yea, of whatsoever things can fall into any part of man's life." † He affirms also, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; but faith is not but in respect of the word of God; therefore whatsoever is not done by

* See Davidson's Eccl. Pol. of the N. Testament, pp. 4–24.

† Ecclesia, p. 24.

the word of God is sin." His opponents said, then, "To take up a straw without warrant from the word of God is sin." He replied, "The sentence of the Apostle reacheth even to the taking up of a straw."

In opposition to this theory, we observe that while the New Testament, in prescribing a church policy, has also necessarily, to a certain extent, indicated the mode in which a church should administer its ordinary affairs, there is, nevertheless, in the details of church action, much which is left to human reason and discretion. The opposite view is inconsistent with that individual freedom accorded to all believers of the gospel. Christ and his Apostles taught fundamental truths, and indicated by their acts general laws, but did not impose on the church minute precepts like those regulating Jewish worship. In the administration of a church all ordinary business details are left to the united judgment and conscience of the members.

It is, however, quite sufficient to urge, in refutation of the above theory, that complete directions for the minor and comparatively unimportant details of church action are not found in the New Testament. Davidson says pithily, "The New Testament does not contain a book of Leviticus."

3. Still others maintain that we find a sufficiently clear *outline* of church government in the New Testament; everything *essential* is revealed. No man need be at a loss to discover its main features, its fundamental principles, while the unimportant details involved in its practical working are wisely left to the discretion of the churches. Thus we have a polity like the elm, firmly rooted, yet pliant. It is a law of Christ to be tenaciously maintained; yet a law so wisely framed as to adapt itself to all times and emergencies.

This theory, which is the golden mean between the other two, is the only tenable one. That in the administration of the early churches there were some things local and temporary, and consequently not binding on us, is clear to any attentive reader of the New Testament. We must separate that which is essential, and consequently authoritative, from that which is local and temporary. It is not very difficult to do this.

A. Whatever is clearly indicated, either by the precepts of Scrip-

ture or by the example of the churches under the immediate guidance of the Apostles, as to the offices and officers of a church, the mode of their election and ordination, the reception of members, and the discipline of offenders, public and private, is *essential* to the polity of an apostolic church. The teachings of the New Testament in its later portions, where we find the apostolic form of church government most fully developed, are, on the whole, most weighty and decisive.

B. When, for a given act or procedure, we have not essentially the same reason which existed in the time of the Apostles, we may discard it. We are not bound to salute each other with an "holy kiss," nor to observe the agapæ or love feasts, because the church at Jerusalem saw fit so to do, nor to follow its example in having all things common.

C. Whatever the early Christians did under the special and extraordinary influence of the Spirit is not binding on us. Their acts in such circumstances were altogether peculiar and exceptional.

D. Those things concerning which the early churches may have generally differed are non-essential; while the things in which they generally agreed are essential and permanent, provided that the same reason for them still essentially exists. If we hold fast these obvious principles, we shall be able to trace, without unusual difficulty, that system of church polity presented in the New Testament.*

* See Davidson's Eccl. Pol. of the N. Testament, pp. 31–35.

CHAPTER I.

ECCLESIA.

I. *The primary signification of ecclesia.* — *Ecclesia* signifies an assembly or congregation. It was used in Greece to designate assemblies gathered for both political and legislative purposes. No one, however, who had not certain qualifications, which were clearly defined and well understood, could belong to these assemblies. They were made up of citizens, as distinguished from slaves and foreigners residing in the country. These assemblies were usually called together by a crier; this fact is incorporated in the word *ecclesia* which is made up of ἐκ and καλέω, to call out. When, in a subsequent chapter, we notice the characteristics belonging to true members of a Christian church, we shall then see how naturally the word, as used in Greece, was appropriated to designate a congregation of believers who have been called out from the world by the Spirit, and have received from Him certain indispensable qualifications.

II. *The use of ecclesia in the New Testament.* — It is found in the New Testament one hundred and sixteen times, and has several distinct applications.

1. It is employed in Acts xix. 32, in describing an unlawful assembly, the Ephesian mob. Luke says, "The assembly was confused;" but in verse 39, it is preceded by the adjective "lawful." The town clerk said, "If ye make any demand concerning other things,"—i. e., any matters of public interest as opposed to those of a private character, — "it shall be determined in the lawful assembly."

2. It is also used to designate the congregation of the Israelites assembled at Sinai (Acts vii. 38), and their ordinary convocation for worship (Heb. ii. 12; Ps. xxii. 23). The Hebrew *kahal* is generally translated by the Seventy, *ecclesia*.

3. *Ecclesia*, in the New Testament, sometimes designates the universal church. This includes all that are united to Christ by faith, whether in heaven or in earth. All true believers, by whatever name known, belong to it. From its nature and breadth it cannot have any outward, visible organization. In Eph. i. 22–23, Christ is declared to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body. Every believer both in heaven and earth must belong to the body of Christ. In iii. 21, we are told that glory is to be given to God in the church, through its Head, Christ, throughout all ages, and in v. 23–32 Christ is declared to be the Head of the church, which is subject to him, which he loves, for which he gave himself, which he sanctifies and presents to himself holy and blameless. This can be nothing but the church in its totality. (Com. Matt. xvi. 18; Col. i. 18, 24; Heb. xii. 23.)

4. In some instances it designates simply believers as a class. In Acts xii. 1, Luke says, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to maltreat certain of the church." Herod Agrippa First ruled over all Palestine. The persecution which scattered the church at Jerusalem had ceased sometime before the act of Herod referred to in the above passage, and churches had sprung up throughout the provinces under his control (Acts ix. 31). So while the church at Jerusalem might have been prominent in Luke's thought, the word church in this instance has probably a more extended meaning; it designates believers generally who were made to feel Herod's oppression.

In 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; Phil. iii. 6, Paul speaks of his persecution of the church of God; not alone the church at Jerusalem on which his blows principally fell, for he received a commission to persecute the Christians meeting in the synagogues of Damascus, and, as a result of his conversion; the church throughout Palestine had peace (Acts ix. 31). In these passages again, church means simply believers. (Com. 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. iii. 15.)

Yet in the passages where *ecclesia* denotes believers as a class, there is no reference to any general outward organization for the purpose of government, nor is there any reference to the believers of a given country except in a single instance (Acts ix. 31). But here there is no intimation that the churches of Judea, Galilee and Samaria were united under a general government. The

conversion of Saul, the chief persecutor, is first recorded in the chapter. As a natural consequence, the church throughout the three provinces which were united under one governor had peace. The inner life, the spiritual growth of the church, is the subject of the verse. The church was built up in faith and knowledge (Com. 1 Cor. viii. 1; x. 23; xiv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 11); so that it walked in the fear of the Lord and was comforted by the indwelling Spirit, and, as a necessary consequence, its numbers were multiplied.

Moreover, in Gal. i. 22, and 1 Thess. ii. 14, Paul speaks of the churches of Judea as separate and independent bodies. If, in the passage before us, Luke had intended to designate an organization like the Church of England, or the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, *ἐκκλησία* would most naturally have been followed immediately by *τῆς Ἰουδαίας* instead of by *καθ' ὅλης*.

5. In a large majority of instances, *ecclesia* designates a local body of believers who could assemble in a single place for worship and were under the exclusive oversight of their own officers.

A. In Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philem. 2, *ecclesia* denotes a band of believers accustomed to assemble in a private house. The first two passages speak of two churches, one in Rome, the other in Ephesus, each of which, at different times, met in the house of Prisca or Priscilla and Aquilla. They were tentmakers (Acts xviii. 3), and probably had apartments large enough to accommodate a considerable number of persons. In apostolic times, believers being destitute of houses of worship, or compelled to hide from persecution, resorted to private dwellings. In these passages, then, *ecclesia* certainly means a local body of believers.

B. Ecclesia also designates single congregations of believers in towns and cities. In Acts ii. 47, it denotes the church in Jerusalem which daily met in the temple (verse 46. Com. viii. 1; xi. 22; xv. 4, 22; xviii. 22). In xiii. 1; xiv. 26–27; xv. 3, the church in Antioch is mentioned. 1 Cor. i. 2, and 2 Cor. i. 1, speak of the church in Corinth. In Acts xx. 17, 28, the church at Ephesus is pointed out, and in Rom. xvi. 1, that at Cenchrea. In Rev. ii. and iii. the individual churches in seven different places are addressed. No unprejudiced reader can have a reasonable doubt that these local Christian bodies were independent in government. They were united in spirit, but there is not a trace of any general organization which was extended over and embraced them all.

C. We now specially notice, what we have already hinted at in another connection, that the New Testament does not speak of the church of particular countries, like the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, but of the *churches*, as though they were independent bodies. Paul confirmed the churches of Syria and Cilicia (Acts xv. 41). The churches of Asia Minor were established (xvi. 5). In 1 Cor. xvi. 1, Gal. i. 2, Paul speaks of the churches of Galatia; in 1 Cor. xvi. 19, of the churches of Asia, and in 2 Cor. viii. 1, 18, 19, 23, 24, of the churches of Macedonia. In Gal. i. 22 and 1 Thess. ii. 14, he writes of the churches of Judea. Christ bade John write to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. i. 11).

D. The Apostle not only designates the congregations of believers within a province or country as churches, but he speaks also (Rom. xvi. 4) "of all the churches of the Gentiles;" when he forbids women to pray unveiled (1 Cor. xi. 16), he adds the *churches* of God have no such custom. If these churches had been only units, comprised in a general organization called the church, he would not have failed to say the church has no such custom. In 1 Cor. vii. 17, where he gave the law which defines the duties of the believing consort when united to the unbelieving, he adds, "So I ordain in all the churches." If there had been a general government over them all, such a course would have been unnecessary. A single promulgation of the law to the church, as a whole, would have been sufficient. In xiv. 33, Paul declares that God is the author of peace, as opposed to confusion or contention, in all *churches* of the saints. In verse 34, he lays down the law that women are to keep silence in the *churches*. It is, in short, a general principle, that whenever the Apostle lays down law for church discipline, he enjoins it on the churches, instead of the church, indicating that all executive action was intended to be confined to local bodies of believers. Speaking of his own work (2 Cor. xi. 28) for believers, much of which was administrative, he says, "there comes upon me the care," not of the church, but "of all the *churches*."

E. Ecclesia is sometimes qualified by distributives. In Acts xiv. 23 we have *every* church, κατ' ἐκκλησίαν. In 1 Cor. iv. 17, we have πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ, every church. These distributives tend to confirm the conclusion that *ecclesia*, as used in the New Testament, in a large majority of cases denotes a local, independent body of

believers. It is with this last signification of *ecclesia* that we have mainly to do in these notes.

It is objected, however, that in some cities, e. g., Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, the disciples were too numerous to assemble as a single congregation. From necessity there must have been several congregations; it is, therefore, most natural to conclude that these were united in some general organization called the church. (See Dick's Theology, Vol. II. p. 478, seq. Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, p. 203.)

As Dick fairly represents the Presbyterian argument on the subject in hand, we will examine what he has written. The main points of his discussion are as follows: —

Three thousand were added to the disciples assembled in Jerusalem (Acts ii. 41); to these others were daily added (verse 47). Five thousand *men*, exclusive of women, soon joined the three thousand (iv. 4), making eight thousand, and many more, if the women are included. Not long after, multitudes of both sexes were added to the eight thousand (v. 14); even these multitudes were vastly augmented, and among the new recruits was a great company of priests (vi. 7). Believers so increased at Jerusalem, that the elders of the church there could say to Paul, "Thou seest, brother, how many *myriads*, or tens of thousands, of Jews there are who believe" (xxi. 20). Now it is absurd to suppose that so many belonged to a single congregation or church.

1. We reply, this argument is fallacious, because it assumes that a church would lose its independence if separate parties belonging to it should meet for worship in different places, successively or simultaneously. A local, independent church may be compelled or may choose to meet in separate companies for worship in the same city or neighborhood, and yet maintain its independent character, by ignoring all authority outside of itself, and by assembling in one place for the transaction of its business. When the disciples at Jerusalem met in different houses, or worship-rooms* (Acts ii. 46), even to celebrate the Lord's supper, they did nothing inconsistent with the independence of the church to which they belonged; and no one, without clear and decisive evidence, could reasonably

* See Jacob's Eccl. Pol. of N. T., p. 191, note.

conclude that these separate companies of worshippers were churches which must be regarded as the units of some general organization.

2. The argument is built up, to a considerable extent, on false interpretation. The five thousand mentioned in Acts iv. 4, is not in addition to the three thousand of ii. 41, but inclusive of it. The words are best translated, "the number of the men *became* about five thousand." That "men" designates both sexes is clear from Luke xi. 31, and from the spirit of the gospel, which would forbid the exclusion of women from an enumeration of converts (Gal. iii. 28). That myriads, in Acts xxi. 20, means a large but indefinite number, is manifest from Luke xii. 1; Heb. xii. 22; Jude 14. The probability is also that the large number referred to were the converted Jews of Judea, rather than of Jerusalem, since Paul arrived at Jerusalem during either the festival of the Passover or Pentecost (Acts xviii. 21. See Hack. in loco), when the Jewish Christians from every part of Palestine were there. The multitude spoken of in xxi. 20, in contrast with the Jews among the Gentiles (verse 21), decidedly favors this view.

3. This argument overlooks all changes wrought in the church at Jerusalem for the space of twenty-five years. Dick vainly endeavors to destroy the force of the fact that many of the first three thousand converts were temporary sojourners in Jerusalem, and must have departed to their homes soon after the Pentecost,* while he takes no account of the persecution (Acts viii.), which scattered the church so that probably many of its members never returned, nor of the depletion which would naturally take place by removals and death. He overstates the numbers added, but quite ignores those subtracted. Moreover, he fails to note the fact that in every congregation many are kept from the usual meetings by business, sickness and household cares.

4. No one can reasonably infer from the notices of the church at Jerusalem in the Acts, that it was composed of several separate congregations united under one general government. After the Pentecost the converted met in the same place, ἐπὶ τὸ αυτὸ (Acts ii. 44). That this is the meaning of the Greek phrase is settled by its usage in other passages. In Matt. xxii. 34, the Pharisees are

* See Neander's Planting and Training of the Christian Church, Robinson's Trans., p. 8.

said to have assembled in one place or together, ἐπὶ τὸ αυτὸ. (Com. Luke xvii. 35; 1 Cor. xi. 20.) We read in Acts i. 15, "The number of names *together* was about one hundred and twenty. Hackett says, "It means not that they were so many collectively, but that so many came *together* at this time." That the above Greek phrase, in Acts ii. 1, means *in one place*, is incontrovertible. In this instance it cannot mean, as some assert, unity of purpose, for ὁμοθυμαδὸν, with one accord, expresses that; but if, in the first verse, it means *in one place*, it must also signify the same in verse 44, especially when verse 46 points out the place of meeting, "daily attending with one accord in the temple." iv. 26, however, is confidently quoted as a text in which ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ means unity of purpose, and nothing more; for the parties named in verse 27 did not assemble in one place.

If this were so, it would be only a single exception, and hence as a proof comparatively worthless, since the Greek phrase in hand, whenever it occurs in other passages, has the meaning that we have indicated; but it is not so. In verses 5 and 6 the rulers are spoken of as "gathered together at Jerusalem," and Peter addressed them (verse 8). They conferred with each other (verse 15). Peter and John having been dismissed went to their "own company," and stated the facts of their imprisonment and trial, when their brethren quoted the second Psalm as having been fulfilled by these incidents. The above Greek phrase in the quotation is connected only with the rulers: "The rulers assembled together." The Psalm, however, suggests a more remote incident, the league of Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, but the phrase ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ does not occur in verse 27. As the rulers just assembled in one place to consult against the Apostles, so Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, assembled in Jerusalem (verse 27) to consult against Christ. As the latter only fulfilled God's purpose (verse 28), so now the Lord is besought to make the threatenings of the rulers futile, by giving conclusive proof, in the working of miracles, that he is with his disciples. Instead of identifying rulers of verse 26 with those mentioned in verse 27, they should be linked with those of verse 6; thus a correct interpretation makes this passage also confirm our position.

In this discussion we have taken for granted that κατ' οἶκον (Acts ii. 46) means "from house to house," or in different worship-rooms;

but it stands in antithesis with "in the temple." The latter points out the public place in which the church worshipped, the former the private place. That this private worship may have been in some fixed place, instead of from house to house, is hardly improbable when we find that κατ' οἶκον in Philem. 2; Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15, does denote a particular private house where believers were accustomed to worship, and that the disciples had an upper room in Jerusalem, into which they entered for prayer after the ascension (Acts i. 13–14). This room may have been the place of private worship referred to in ii. 46. (See DeWette, Meyer, Bengel, Olshausen, Lechler, and Alford, in loco. See on κατά Thesaurus of the Greek Language, and Harrison on Greek Prepositions.)

It appears, then, that after the Pentecost the church at Jerusalem did meet in one place. We must also conclude, from the statements of Acts vi., that after the disciples became five thousand (iv. 4), they still acted as a unit. The Twelve call "the multitude of the disciples to them" (vi. 2), and address them as a united body summoned to transact important business (verse 3). The word of the Apostles pleases "*the whole multitude*" (verse 5), and it acts as its leaders direct.

The 15th chapter also presents to us the believers at Jerusalem assembled together to hear the message of Paul and Barnabas (verse 4). All the multitude listened (verse 12), and "*the whole church*" came to a decision on the question laid before it (verse 22). This church, then full seventeen years after its establishment, did meet in one place and transact business.

The objection so strenuously urged that there was no place in which so large a body could meet, is futile, since opposed by plain declarations of Scripture. And of what avail is it to urge that the church worshipped in different places, when, even if it did, there is not a particle of evidence that there was more than one organization in the city, when the evidence is so clear and decisive that the whole church as an independent body transacted all its business?

Neander says, "The epistles of the Apostle Paul give the clearest evidence that all the Christians of one city originally formed one whole church. Yet we may easily suppose that some parts of the church, without separating themselves from the whole body and

its guidance, held particular meetings in the house of some person whose locality was suitable, and who acted as the teacher for the edification of such small assemblies. . . . . To consider these as absolutely separate and distinct churches would be inconsistent.*

That *ecclesia*, when, in the New Testament, it designates Christians organized under government, means a local, independent congregation, is confirmed by the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers. Thus Clement, probably an associate of Paul (Phil. iv. 3; Euseb. Eccl. His., Book III. Chs. 15 and 16), speaks of the church at Rome and of that at Corinth (1 Epistle, Ch. 1), and of "the presbyters set over" the latter, and of "the multitude" or "the majority" which "commands" (Ch. 54). He refers to ministers appointed by the Apostles, or other eminent men, "with the consent of the whole church" (Ch. 44). Polycarp, probably a disciple of John (see Martyrdom of Ignatius, Ch. 3), speaks of the church at Philippi (Salutation of Ep. to the Phil). Ignatius also uniformly speaks of the churches as independent bodies. In the salutations of his epistles, he addresses different churches located in various towns and cities. He speaks of the officers of the churches addressed, and it is clear that in his conception a bishop was never placed over more than one church. He appeals to this and that church to gather at their "one altar" (Mag. Ch. 7) and to partake of "one and the same bread" (Eph. Ch. 20). He exhorts the church at Ephesus "to assemble frequently in the same place" (Ch. 13).

We find similar representations in the early Church Fathers. Origen (born in Alexandria 185, taught principally at Cæsarea, died 254), and Cyprian (born at the beginning of third century, became bishop of Carthage) often speak, just as the New Testament does, of churches in various localities, e. g., the church in Rome, Smyrna, Antioch, Athens, Alexandria. Dionysius (born in Alexandria last of second century, died there 265) mentions the churches of Cilicia; Irenæus, the churches in Germany, Spain, Egypt and Lybia; and Tertullian, the churches of Asia and Phrygia. Lord King, an indefatigable and accurate student of the Fathers, and a member of the Church of

* See Planting and Training of the Christian Church, Robinson's Trans. p. 153, note. History Tor. Trans. Vol. I. p. 185.

England, says that, with a single exception in the writings of Cyprian, all the Fathers "always said the churches, never the church of a kingdom or province" (Lord King, Primitive Church, p. 22). There is the clearest evidence that the churches of the third century, notwithstanding the growing ecclesiastical corruption, were still independent bodies (Mosheim's Coms. Vol. II. p. 120, seq. Bunsen's Hippolytus, Vol. III. p. 220). For a considerable period, the church of a given town or city was often called *παροικία*. Christians were regarded as sojourners here on earth, as aliens whose home was in heaven. (See Lightfoot's Com. on I. Ep. of Clement, p. 32.) The word is used in this concrete sense hundreds of times in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, and in such a way as to point out the independent Christian brotherhoods to which the author has occasion to refer.

The fact that it required so long a period to override and destroy the independence of the churches, even amid the increasing corruptions of the post-apostolic age, is strong evidence that the apostolic churches, after which they were modelled, were local, independent bodies.

Episcopacy, however, in a mild form, began to appear in the East, in the latter part of the second century; but it was confined to single congregations. The elders of a given church appointed one of their number to act as chairman, and to take the general oversight of the affairs of the congregation, and though at first such chairmen were only Primi inter pares, yet they gradually assumed superior authority which came to be acknowledged by the churches. This was the egg from which modern episcopacy hatched. Yet for three centuries no church successfully exercised any authority over another; the bishops of local churches were absolutely equal. (See Mosheim's Coms. Vol. II. p. 120 and seq.) Yet in the last half of the second century, the apostolic idea of the church which still generally bore sway was in conflict with the unscriptural tendency which had begun to make itself felt. (Neander's History Tor. tr., Vol. I. pp. 190—197. Mosheim's Coms. Vol. I. pp. 322—334.)

But even this incipient episcopacy cannot be discovered in the New Testament, nor is there any trace of authoritative assemblies like presbyteries and synods. Here churches were local and inde-

pendent. The seven churches of Asia, the last mentioned in the Record, are addressed individually; customs are found in some that are not tolerated by others; one is lax in discipline, while another is strict; one is incorrupt in doctrine, while another is corrupt, which could have been the case only on the condition of their being independent bodies.

If it be said that Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Methodists speak of their churches in various localities, and yet such churches are not independent, we reply, that they also often speak of the churches of their respective names as embracing a state or nation; while the New Testament, except in a single instance where there is no reference to outward organization, always speaks of the churches, never of the church of a province or country. If, in the apostolic day the churches, in any part of the world, had been subjected to a general ecclesiastical government, we should have had some hint of it in the Acts and Epistles. But it is clear that all such governments are later hierarchical growths.

If now, the New Testament always speaks of churches as local bodies, having no connection with each other by means of outward organization, then, if we follow its teaching, we must discard as unscriptural every form of ecclesiastical government which violates, in the slightest degree, the independence of the churches.

CHAPTER II.

CHURCH MEMBERS.

The apostolic churches were composed of baptized believers. We mean by "baptized," immersed in water, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and by "believers" those who not only give credence to the truths of Christianity, but who also have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ by a saving faith.

I. The members of apostolic churches were baptized. It is certain that those gathered into the church at Jerusalem, immediately after the Pentecost, were baptized (Acts ii. 41), and though nothing is said of subsequent baptisms in that city, this is sufficient to reveal the law which controlled the church in its reception of members. Nothing would have been required of the first three thousand which was not of those who were afterwards added to them.

Lydia and her household (Acts xvi. 14–15), and the jailer and his household (verse 33), the first converts and members of the church at Philippi, were also baptized.

We learn from Acts xviii. 8, that when Paul gathered a church at Corinth he baptized those received into it. That all its members were baptized is put beyond question by his first epistle to this church, which he addressed as baptized (i. 13; xii. 13).

When Paul entered Ephesus for the purpose of preaching the gospel, he found a company of disciples who had received John's baptism, but on account of their imperfect knowledge at the time of their baptism, he rebaptized them (Acts xix. 2–5). If he rebaptized these, he certainly required baptism of those subsequently received into the same church. In his epistle to the Ephesians, he speaks as though their baptism was as well known as their Lord and their faith (Eph. iv. 5).

Rom. vi. 3–4; Gal. iii. 27; Col. ii. 12, unquestionably establish the fact that the members of the church at Rome, of the churches of Galatia, and of the church at Colosse, were all baptized.

II. The members of apostolic churches were believers.

1. None except believers were baptized. This is implied, if not taught, in the great Commission (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16). Apostolic teaching or example alone could justify an inversion of the order here presented of belief and baptism; but the Apostles in both their utterances and practices strictly followed it. Those that "received the word" at Jerusalem were baptized (Acts ii. 41, 44). The *believers* in Samaria received baptism (viii. 12), and only on the condition of belief would Philip baptize the eunuch (viii. 37). After the scales fell from Saul's eyes, he was baptized (ix. 18). Peter could not forbid baptism to those at Cæsarea who spoke with tongues (x. 46), and had received the Holy Spirit (verse 47). After Lydia's heart was opened (xvi. 15), and the jailer and his household believed, they were baptized (verses 33, 34).

2. But we have, if possible, still more direct and conclusive evidence that the churches of the New Testament were made up of believers. The church at Jerusalem is spoken of as a body of saints (Acts ix. 13; Rom. xv. 25, 26; 2 Cor. viii. 4). The church at Lydda (Acts ix. 32), Rome (Rom. i. 7), Corinth (1 Cor. i. 2; vi. 1, 2), Ephesus (Eph. i. 1), Philippi (Phil. i. 1), and Colosse (Col. i. 2), are all spoken of, or addressed as saints. The word translated saint is cognate with ἁγιάζω, which is used to denote cleansing by sacrificial blood (Heb. x. 10, 14), purification by the Holy Spirit (Rom. xv. 16), and setting apart for a sacred purpose (Jno. x. 36; xvii. 17). The primary meaning of saint is pure, clean. Paul then means by saints those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, purified by the Spirit, and set apart to the service of God.

Paul also addresses the churches in Rome, Thessalonica, and Galatia as brethren (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Thess. i. 4; v. 1, 4, 12; Gal. i. 11; iii. 15). Being brethren of the Apostle, like him they were renewed men. Again he calls the Thessalonians "holy" (1 Thess. v. 27). The Hebrews are also styled "holy brethren" (Heb. iii. 1). Those to whom this epithet was applied must have been made holy through faith in Christ.

There are also in the epistles expressions, too numerous to mention, which describe the members of the churches addressed as regenerate and believers. Paul speaks of the faith of the

church at Rome (Rom. i. 8; vi. 17); he calls the Corinthians the temple of God which is holy (1 Cor. iii. 17); he exhorts them to be separate from unbelievers (2 Cor. vi. 14–16). He reminds the Galatians that they had received the Spirit (Gal. iii. 2), and exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty conferred by Christ (verse 1). He assures the Ephesians that they are fellow-citizens with the saints (Eph. ii. 19), and an "habitation of God in the Spirit" (verse 22). He also tells the Colossians that though they were dead in trespasses, Christ had imparted to them spiritual life and granted them forgiveness (Col. ii. 13). This conclusive testimony may be developed to almost any extent. The conclusion, therefore, is irrefragable, that the apostolic churches were made up of baptized believers.

There is, then, according to the teachings of the New Testament, no place in a Christian church for unbelievers. The churches do not, as Rome teaches, save men by receiving them into their communion. Nor is there any place in them for baptized infants. A church is simply a body of baptized believers, united by a common faith, whose divine commission is to preach the gospel, which they have themselves experienced, to every creature.

CHAPTER III.

THE POWERS OF A CHURCH.

I. WHENCE are the powers of a church derived? From Christ.

1. The Old Testament represents him as a King ruling forever over his house, i. e., his church (2 Sam. vii. 13; Heb. iii. 6), and as the anointed King over Zion (Ps. ii. 6), who will extend his kingdom over the whole earth (verse 8; Luke i. 32–34). He was condemned to death for claiming to be King (Matt. xxvii. 11, 29, 37; Luke xxiii. 3; Jno. xviii. 34, 37), though he expressly said, my kingdom is not of this world (verse 36). He is styled the commander of the people, i. e., of the redeemed (Isa. lv. 4), and the burden of administering the government of the church rests on him (Isa. ix. 6–7. Com. xxii. 22; Rev. iii. 7). He also purges the ministry of his church (Mal. iii. 3).

2. He is represented as prophet, mediator and lawgiver to whom the people are commanded to hearken (Deut. xviii. 15–19; Acts iii. 22–23).

3. God from his throne said, at Christ's transfiguration, even while Moses and Elijah stood on the mountain, "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him" (Matt. xvii. 5; Mark ix. 7).

4. Christ gave the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to the church (Matt. xxviii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 23–26).

5. He gave the church its teachers (Eph. iv. 11. Com. 1 Cor. xii. 28). Paul is careful to show that Christ called him to be an apostle, lest any should think that he had no claim to that honor (Rom. i. 5; Gal. i. 1).

6. He gave to Peter the keys of his kingdom, with power to bind and loose (Matt. xvi. 19). He conferred the same power on the other disciples (xviii. 18; Jno. xx. 23).

7. He gave the great law of discipline to the church (Matt. xviii. 15–18), and, to say nothing of what the Apostles, directed by his Spirit, taught on this point, he personally directed the churches of Asia in the work of discipline.

8. He is declared Head over all things to the church (Eph. i. 22), and also the Bridegroom, the church his bride (Jno. iii. 29; Rev. xxi. 2, 9; xxii. 17). Paul, with this representation in mind, teaches that the church is subjected to Christ, as the wife to the husband.

There is no other source of power hinted at in the Scriptures. If Christ is the only source, then it is not the church; Romish pretensions are baseless, and no general ecclesiastical organizations contain power, for which there is scriptural warrant, that they can confer on individual churches.

II. What kind of power has Christ delegated to his churches?

1. He has not delegated legislative power, — that has been wholly reserved for himself.

A. This is implied, if not taught, in the passages of Scripture which show that he is the source from which the churches derive their power. He is an *absolute King*, who gave to the churches a complete law for their guidance. He came to the earth to reveal the Father (Jno. i. 18; xvii. 26), who said "Hear him." His will was the Father's will, and to him alone the Apostles looked for guidance in their work. He gave to them the keys of the kingdom, and dropped no hint that any others had the right to give them.

B. He gave to the church all that is required for its perfection (Eph. iv. 13). We need no more ordinances, for the two that he gave symbolize all the great truths of the gospel and Christian experience. Matt. xviii. is a sufficient guide in all cases of discipline arising from private offences. Paul, professing to be guided in all things by Christ, shows us how to deal with public offences (1 Cor. v.), and teaches also that Holy Scripture is sufficient to completely equip a man *for all good works* (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). Christ certainly has not authorized any to add to those laws which are all-sufficient for the work and perfecting of his church.

C. He is declared to be the "one Law-giver" (James iv. 12. Com. Isa. xxxiii. 22). If the one here referred to were God the Father, it would show that legislative power was not given to the church; but Christ is evidently the One in the mind of James, who is talking of the duties that brethren owe to each other in the church, of which Christ is the Head. He also styles the one Law-giver, the Judge, but by comparing v. 8–9, we see that he desig-

nates Christ as the Judge. The gospel also teaches that Christ will judge the world (Matt. xxv. 31; Jno. v. 27; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 8). If the *one* Lawgiver is Christ, then of course there is no other.

D. Christ restricts his church to that which he commands (Matt. xxviii. 20). The Apostles were careful to show that they were directed in all things by Christ (Acts xi. 14–17; 1 Cor. xi. 23; Gal. i. 11, 12). It may be said that this command is not a restriction, but when we take it in connection with the last statement, it is clear that the Apostles understood that they were to teach only what they received from Christ.

One question arises, since Christ revealed his will through inspired Apostles, have we any evidence that this inspiration ceased with the apostolic age? Does not Christ now speak through other inspired men?

The marked inferiority of the best writings of the Apostolic Fathers to the Scriptures furnishes probable evidence that those writings were uninspired. I not only refer to the style, but also to the fanciful conceits in interpretation. There is a vast chasm between the Sacred Canon and these productions, that no ingenuity can ever bridge over.

The closing words of the canon (Rev. xxii. 18–19), in which a dire curse is pronounced on any one who adds to, or subtracts from Christ's revelations, show that Christ has completed the law of the church. We may grant that "book" here means only the Revelation, yet since, from its whole structure, the Spirit evidently designed it for the close of the Sacred Canon, the declaration virtually applies to the whole. Other books of Sacred Scripture were written by inspiration as well as this; if nothing can be added to or subtracted from this, for the same reason nothing can be added to or taken from them. This is confirmed by Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32, where God utters the same prohibition concerning the Mosaic law, and also by the explicit warnings of Christ and his Apostles against receiving for God's teachings the commandments of men (Matt. xv. 6–9. Com. Isa. xxix. 13; Col. ii. 22; Titus i. 14).

Christ, then, is the only lawgiver of the church. No church can legislate. With law-making it has nothing to do. This conclusion, however, applies only to the essential elements of that church

government found in the New Testament. Churches are free to determine the details of their business and services, provided always that these details are in strict harmony with the law of Christ.

2. Christ has given to the churches judicial and executive power.

We will divide our proposition, and speak first of judicial power. That this has been delegated to the churches is clear.

A. From the fact that its exercise is necessary for the maintenance of the peculiar character of a church as a body holding distinctive truths. Such a body must decide from evidence concerning the qualifications of each applicant for membership, or else permit the line which separates it from the world to be obliterated by the reception of the unregenerate. But such an act is judicial.*

B. That judicial power is granted to the churches is also evident from the fact that it is involved in discipline. Without the discipline of those church members who become corrupt in doctrine or life, or in both, no church can long continue to exist. But this necessary discipline involves a judicial process. Evidence must be adduced to substantiate the charge made against a member, and on that testimony the church must declare its judgment.

Discipline that involves the exercise of judicial power is commanded in the Scriptures. Christ taught that the incorrigible offender is to be brought before the church (Matt. xviii. 17), which shall determine his offence and mete out the fitting penalty. Paul

* There is no evidence in the New Testament that the apostolic churches required applicants for membership to relate their Christian experience. Nor is this necessary now; if in any other way a church has become satisfied that an applicant is regenerate and correct in belief, it may waive the formality of relating an experience. Yet the customary relation of experience is proper, since it enables a church more correctly to judge of the spiritual condition of the applicant. That the New Testament churches did, in some way, determine the qualifications of applicants for membership, is evident, because none were received into them unless they gave evidence of possessing faith. When the Apostles, who possessed superior discernment of others (Acts v. 1–11; xiii. 9), were with the churches, they guided them to correct decisions. A church, therefore, ought not to insist on receiving the evidence concerning the spiritual state of applicants in any prescribed form. It is sufficient if the evidence is presented in any form.

directly presents the judicial element in discipline (1 Cor. v. 12), when he commands the Corinthians to put away from them a man guilty of incest. Christ also calls upon the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira to exercise like discipline (Rev. ii. 14–16, 20).*

It is unnecessary to prove that a church has executive power, as probably no one denies it. Whenever a church puts in execution any of Christ's commands, that power is exercised; but it will be necessary to show, —

* 1. The judgment of a church in a case of exclusion only determines the nature of the offence of which the excluded member is guilty, and declares him unworthy of church fellowship so long as he remains impenitent. The judgment is limited to this life, and to the relation of the offender to the church. The church can mete out no penalty except exclusion. It cannot determine the final state of the offender. Final judgment God expressly reserves to himself (Deut. xxxii. 35; Rom. xii. 19; 1 Cor. v. 13). There is no scriptural warrant for the penalties inflicted on offenders, through the civil power, by State churches, nor for the anathemas of Rome. So far from this the Scriptures teach that one object of discipline is to save the excommunicated (1 Cor. v. 5). As the person here referred to was guilty of a most execrable crime, the case is a strong one; if the Apostle demanded his exclusion in order to secure his final salvation, this ought to be an important object in every exclusion. Excommunication secured the reformation of this base transgressor (2 Cor. ii. 6–11). That this end should be aimed at in exclusion is further taught in 1 Tim. i. 20. It is true that Christ says, "Let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 17), i. e., no longer regard him as in fellowship with you, but as numbered with the unregenerate. It is our duty to preach the gospel to the heathen and publicans that they may be saved; so in faithfulness and love we ought to make earnest efforts for the salvation of the excluded.

2. There are some intimations in the Scriptures that there are penalties besides exclusion which a church may inflict. In 1 Thess. v. 14, the brethren, as distinguished from the officers of the church, were called upon to warn the disorderly or unruly. Yet there is no evidence in the passage that anything more was intended than such warning as would be uttered by individuals in an ordinary exhortation. But some of the churches were called upon to *withdraw* themselves from, and to *avoid* those who cause divisions, walk disorderly, or disobey the word of the Apostle (Rom. xvi. 17; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15; Tit. iii. 10). It is clear from these passages that those who were to be thus treated were still to remain in the churches. Still, there may be no hint even here of any penalty *formally* inflicted by a vote of the church; yet, that a church might appropriately formally censure a member for conduct unbecoming his profession, hardly admits of a doubt.

3. That both executive and judicial power are exercised by the *entire body of the church.*

A. The church at Antioch in Syria, by the formal action of the whole body, put in execution the Great Commission (Acts xiii. 3). It is true that the prophets and teachers of the church are most prominent in the transaction; but the fast here spoken of is a different one from that mentioned in the preceding verse, and probably the entire church participated in it, and the act of sending the Apostles away, even if performed by a few, was that of the entire church, through its representatives. (See Hackett in loc.) The same church performed a similar act when Paul was about to begin his second missionary journey; the entire body, perhaps by some public service, committed him and Silas unto the grace of God.

B. We have still more decisive proof in Matt. xviii. 15–17. The language of this passage shows that the entire church is to act in judging the offender and in executing Christ's law of discipline upon him.

Some writers, like Calvin and Beza, have said that *ecclesia* in the above passage means the Jewish Sanhedrim. It is sufficient to reply that this word is never used in the New Testament to denote the Sanhedrim, and the opinion that Jesus sent his disciples to the Jewish rulers for the settlement of their difficulties is now an exegetical curiosity (Jno. ix. 22). "Is it likely he would send his lambs and sheep, for right and healing, unto wolves and tigers? Both their Sanhedrim and most of their synagogues were no better; . . had not the Jews already agreed that if any man did confess Christ, he should be cast out of the synagogue?" (See Davidson's Eccl. Pol. of the New Testament, p. 295. Jno. Cotton, in Keys of the Kingdom, p. 81.)

Others have maintained that *ecclesia* designates here the church as represented by its elders. No ordinary reader would ever suspect this. The word is never used in the New Testament synonymously with presbytery, but is used to designate the body of a church as distinguished from its elders (Acts xv. 22). "That it cannot mean the church as represented by her rulers appears by verses 19 and 20, where any collection of believers is gifted with the power of deciding in such cases." (Alford.)

C. We find another proof of our proposition in 1 Cor. v. 2–5,

12, 13. Paul reproves the *whole church* at Corinth for not dealing promptly with an offender (verse 2), and calls on them when they are assembled to deliver him to Satan (verses 4, 5). He declares that it is their duty to judge their own members (verse 12), and to put that "wicked man" from among themselves (verse 13). In 2 Cor. ii. 6, referring to the same offender, he states that his punishment was inflicted by "the many," or literally "*by the greater number*," which manifestly means the majority.

This case becomes stronger from the consideration that Paul alone, by virtue of his apostolic authority, had the moral right, if not the legal power, to thrust out the incestuous person, without consulting the wishes of the church. He, however, considered it so important for the church to apprehend and exercise its inherent power, that he waived his acknowledged right, and laid the entire responsibility on it. At the same time, he gave assurance that in meeting this responsibility they would be sustained by his authority (verse 4).

Presbyterian writers object to the above, that Tit. iii. 10, and 1 Tim. v. 19, show that the work of discipline belongs to the officers of the church. In the passage from Titus the word translated "reject" should be rendered "avoid" or "shun." This passage does not, however, necessarily refer to discipline at all; but if it does, there is no evidence in a direction so brief as this that Titus exercised such discipline without the concurrence of the churches. If Paul, on his own authority, would not exclude from the Corinthian church a man guilty of incest, he, doubtless, did not direct Titus to exercise greater authority over an offender less culpable.

As to the passage in Timothy, it might be addressed, appropriately, to any one who should now visit weak churches, as Timothy did, for the purpose of strengthening them, though those churches themselves were expected to execute Christ's law of discipline on offenders. Such an evangelist would be called on to preside over the deliberations of any church with which he chanced to be. Very fittingly it might be said to him, acting in such a capacity, "Against an elder," etc. The witnesses mentioned naturally suggest such an interpretation. The church assembles. Timothy, by common consent, is the chairman, and before them are the accused and the witnesses. The following verse makes this interpretation

probable. The word translated "rebuke" often means "convict" (Jno. viii. 9; 1 Cor. xiv. 24; Titus i. 9; James ii. 9). This is the most befitting rendering for this passage, since the conviction is "before all," the entire church being assembled to hear the evidence and to decide. This is in harmony, too, with Christ's law (Matt. xviii; 1 Cor. v.). And when Peter seems to acknowledge the right of the church at Jerusalem to accuse him (Acts xi. 1–18), and carefully explain his conduct to the church, it is unreasonable to suppose that Timothy had the power to discipline *elders* without the concurrence of the churches to which they belonged.

4. There was no appeal, in apostolic times, from the decisions of local churches. That Christ so intended it to be is clear from Matt. xviii. 18. What the church decides, in conformity with Christ's teaching, heaven ratifies, and it is fixed.* There was, then, no place for ecclesiastical courts, which exercise authority over the churches. With rare exceptions, difficulties were definitely settled in and by the church in which they originated. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he appealed to no ecclesiastical court to lay its hand on the schismatics that were troubling them, though these churches were near each other, and might easily have come under the rule of such a body. The same might be said of the churches of Asia. But the advocates of such courts have never ventured to mention but one in the New Testament. Acts xv. has been claimed as a substantial model for an œcumenial, national or provincial synod. (See Dick's Theology, Vol. II., p. 488, seq.)

Is this a valid claim? Let us test it by the record. A church sprung up in the Gentile city of Antioch. Certain men from Jerusalem visited the brethren, and taught that they must be circumcised or they could not be saved (Acts xv. 1). This doctrine was a denial of the sufficiency of faith for salvation, and a subversion of the gospel. These false teachers doubtless refused to submit to Paul and Barnabas, who evidently declared the falsity of their doctrine (xv. 2; Gal. ii. 4, 5). The church consequently deter-

*In Matt. xviii. 18, the primary reference seems to be to the Apostles, on whom was specially conferred the power to bind and loose, to enjoin and prohibit, but the church is also included. Whatever the churches did under the direction of the Apostles was ratified in heaven; and whatever a church may now do, in exact conformity to their teachings, is ratified in the same manner.

mined to send messengers to lay the question before the church at Jerusalem (verse 2). Paul and Barnabas, with others, were chosen for this work, though Paul went up to Jerusalem also by special revelation (Gal. ii. 2). The delegation was gladly received by the church (verse 4), the Apostles and elders being specially mentioned on account of their prominence. The delegates laid their message before the church, and some of the Judaizing members affirmed the same doctrine which had been taught in Antioch (verse 5).

A subsequent meeting was held (verse 6), but before this, it appears from Gal. ii. 2, Paul had a private meeting with the chief men of the church, probably for the purpose of explaining to them his work and views more fully than he could have done in a public gathering, in order that he might secure their support before the question was submitted to the whole assembly. This assembly was composed of Apostles, elders, and the whole body of believers in the city (verses 7, 12, 13, 22).

At first there was much discussion (verse 7) apparently carried on by the elders and brethren, for as soon as the Apostles began to speak (verses 7, 12, 13) the multitude became silent.

At last a document was drawn up by James (Com. with verse 23, James i. 1. See Bengel in loco), in which the entire assembly concurred (verse 25), having become of one mind, i. e., unanimous.

This document was authoritative. It is called *δόγμα*, the word which designates the decree of an emperor (Luke ii. 1).

What gave it its authority? It was dictated by an inspired Apostle (verses 13, 19–21). It was the declared will of all the Apostles then at Jerusalem (verse 23). The entire council, including the brethren, expressed by this document the mind of the Holy Spirit (verse 28).

If it is asked why the Apostles, who alone might have issued a decree equally binding without consulting either the elders or the church, chose to consult them, the answer is easy.

1. It was the only effectual way to silence the Judaizing teachers of Syria and Cilicia. They refused to submit to Paul and Barnabas, else this council at Jerusalem would not have been called for. They came from the mother church, which, by common consent, seemed to be looked up to with special deference; nor is this strange when we consider the sacredness of Jerusalem to

Jewish Christians, the wonders which clustered around the origin of the church there, and the fact that for some years several of the Apostles continued to reside at the Jewish capital. These Judaizers probably claimed to teach the doctrine of the mother church (Acts xv. 24). Under such circumstances, a decree not only from the Apostles, but also from the church as a body, would most effectually silence them. The Gentile churches would know that the claims of these false teachers were baseless; and they, contradicted by the entire church and the whole college of Apostles, would be awed into submission.

2. It was necessary to stay the egress of Judaizing teachers from the church of Jerusalem. If now that church, as a body, should set its seal to a decree that circumcision availed nothing for salvation, it would require great effrontery in any of its members afterwards to teach contrary to such a decree. By divine wisdom the mother church was brought publicly to commit itself against the necessity of circumcision, and through the Apostles to scatter its decree through all the Gentile churches.

Having carefully noticed the occasion, composition, and decree of the convocation presented to us in Acts xv., and why the Apostles united the entire church with them in their action, we conclude that

(*a.*) It was not an œcumenical council, for only the churches of Antioch and Jerusalem were there represented. The churches of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, which were so near at hand, bore no part in its proceedings.

(*b.*) It was unlike a modern synod in its composition; a very large majority were laymen, while synods now exclude all such persons, unless we regard ruling elders as laymen.

(*c.*) It was unlike any council which can now be convened, since it was presided over and directed by *inspired* men. If it is said that Apostles laid aside their inspiration, it is sufficient to answer no evidence can be adduced that, in any public act, so important as the one under consideration, this ever took place. The decree, moreover, was the mind of the Spirit (verse 28), and Paul teaches that at that time he was acting under inspiration (Gal. ii. 6). Nor do councils or synods now attempt to enforce their decrees on churches outside of their respective jurisdictions, while

Paul left the decree from the church at Jerusalem with all the churches visited in his second missionary journey (Acts xvi. 4–5).

(*d.*) It furnishes no warrant for any association of churches to extend their authority over others, since God grants to no churches at the present day inspired decrees, which they may enforce. And we must not forget that the Apostles had no legal power to enforce even an inspired decree. The one under consideration was received and acted on by the churches, solely through the moral power wielded by the Apostles and church that sent it forth. And until we have some authority in the New Testament for ecclesiastical courts, aside from this unique gathering at Jerusalem, we cannot but maintain that there was no appeal from the decisions of individual churches.

(*e.*) The lesson really taught by Acts xv. is, that when a church is unable to settle a difficulty for itself, it may refer the question to another church for counsel. Churches built on New Testament principles are in fellowship with each other. They have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism; they see alike the essential truths of the gospel, and have like views of ordinances and discipline. While local, they have the same form of government; while not united under any general organization, they are united in their views of doctrine and in spirit. This was the case in apostolic times. Members of one church sent salutations to those of another; churches saluted churches (Rom. xvi.; 1 Cor. xvi.; 2 Cor. xiii. 13, 14; Phil. iv. 21, 22; Col. iv. 12–15; Tit. iii. 15). The churches of Macedonia, Galatia, and Achaia helped the poor churches of Judea (1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 1; ix. 1, 2). Churches sent messages to churches (Acts xi. 22; xv. 2, 25, 26; 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19), not to mention the many commands addressed to individuals to love and fellowship one another, which are equally applicable to churches. When, therefore, any case arises in which a church needs the counsel of others, it is right for that church to appeal to another, or to several churches, to advise what is best to be done.*

* Councils are usually called to recognize new churches, to ordain pastors, to advise in reference to the dismissal of pastors, or to assist in deciding a question of discipline, which a church has failed to settle.

Such a council is either mutual or ex parte; mutual, when the parties are

5. The limitations of the powers of a church.

Since we have proved that the apostolic churches were, in polity, local and independent, so that no church or churches could exercise any govermental authority over others, and that in case of discipline there was no appeal to any ecclesiastical court ranking in power above the churches, it is almost superfluous to add that the powers of a church are limited.

1. To its own members. It is its duty to watch over them, to see that they are in some way engaged in Christian labor, and to maintain among them a healthful discipline.

2. By the right of private judgment. Some things are morally indifferent; it is right to do them or to leave them undone (Rom. xiv. 3–5). How richly one shall dress, what he shall eat or drink, how he shall order his own household, are matters which must be left altogether to his judgment, if, in these things, he does not invade the rights of others. It may be his duty to forego that which he believes to be right, so that, by his example, he may not lead others into sin; but of this duty he, not the church, is to be the judge (Rom. xiv. 10–13, 21; Col. ii. 16; 1 Cor. x. 28, 29). We cannot, in such a case, resort to discipline; brotherly persuasion is all that is allowable.

agreed in calling it; ex parte, when one party, considering itself aggrieved and failing to secure the consent of the other, calls a council on its own responsibility.

A council has the right to decide only the questions submitted to it, and, the decision having been reached, it should dissolve.

The decision is not binding unless the parties interested consent to it. That they are usually morally bound to assent is true. The council is supposed to be made up of wise and good men who, having sought the direction of the Spirit in their work, probably have arrived at a correct conclusion. But, aside from moral obligation, there is none. Nor has a council any means of enforcing its decisions. If a church, contrary to its decision, maintains a position which is opposed to sound doctrine, the association to which the church belongs may withdraw from it the hand of fellowship, so that there may be in such a case an indirect moral enforcement of the decision; but that is not an act of the council. To gain assent to its decision it can only fall back on the aid of the Spirit. (See, on this whole subject, Dexter on Congregationalism, p. 64, seq. and 213. Congregational Quarterly, Vol. II. pp. 63, 64. Crowell's Church Member's Manual, p. 263. On Consociations, see Dexter, p. 221, seq. Punchard's View of Congregationalism, p. 75, seq.)

What is true of the authority of councils is true of that of associations.

Moreover, some liberty in belief is to be allowed. It is true that a church must agree as to the main doctrines of the New Testament, but there is such a wide difference in capacity, in education, and in age, that exact agreement in details cannot be expected. A church is not called on to notice such slight deviations from her acknowledged standards. Conscientious differences of opinion on minor and comparatively unimportant points should be permitted (Rom. xiv. 4; Phil. iii. 16).

CHAPTER IV.

CHURCH OFFICERS.

I. TEMPORARY office-bearers. Their work was wholly confined to the early churches. When Christianity was fully established, they disappeared. We must carefully distinguish them from those permanent church officers, without whom no church in any age is really complete.

1. First among these are the Apostles. They were appointed to their office by Christ (Luke vi. 13; Acts i. 2; Gal. i. 1), were inspired so that their teaching and decisions were infallible (Gal. i. 11, 12), and exercised authority over the churches. The early churches received their directions as the law of Christ. They were witnesses of Christ's miracles and resurrection, were immediately instructed by him (Acts i. 3, 21, 22; iv. 33; 1 Cor. xv. 7), and had the power of working miracles in proof of their mission (Matt. x. 8; Luke ix. 1; Acts ii. 43; 2 Cor. xii. 12). They have no successors, since none have ever received their endowments, nor can any man, or class of men, govern churches as they did, since it is impossible now to be invested with their authority. When they died neither Christ nor the church filled the vacancies.

It is true that they possessed all the powers of inferior officers, and they sometimes performed the duties of those officers. They did at first the work of deacons at Jerusalem; James acted as elder there, and Paul at Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth. Peter says that he was also an elder; but whenever they performed any such duty, they did it as Apostles; their apostolic office was not abandoned, any more than a general abandons his office, when, to meet some exigency, he performs the duties of a colonel. (See Litton's Church of Christ, p. 282.)

2. There were also prophets in the apostolic churches. A prophet is one through whom God speaks, as Moses through Aaron (Ex. vii. 1, 2). The prophets of the New Testament churches sometimes foretold future events, though this was not common (Acts xi.

28; xxi. 11). Usually, under some special inspiration of the Spirit, they unfolded the mysterious doctrines of the gospel, so as to edify others (1 Cor. xiv. 1–40). Their inspiration appears to have been only occasional (1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to desire earnestly the prophetic gift (verses 1, 39), and it was imparted through the laying on of hands by the Apostles (Acts xix. 6). The prophets were subject to the Apostles (1 Cor. xiv. 37). Both men and women filled the office (Acts xxi. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 5). Prophets disappeared with the apostolic age.

3. Evangelists are also named in Eph. iv. 11; Acts xxi. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 5. Some think that the office of evangelist was vitally linked with that of the Apostles, since evangelists often accompanied the Apostles in their journeys, and were often sent to do apostolic work. So Calvin and most of the Reformers teach. That evangelists frequently were the agents of the Apostles, and were clothed with their authority, is true; but the Apostles might have sent forth an elder, a deacon, or any Christian man clothed with like powers. Such special work was not peculiar to the evangelist.

Others affirm that an evangelist was sent to preach the gospel where it had not before been proclaimed (Acts viii. 4; xiv. 7; 1 Cor. i. 17; 2 Cor. x. 16). This the word itself suggests, and is doubtless the true view. (See Hodge, Elicott and Olshausen on Eph. iv. 11.)

There is room for doubt if the evangelist, as such, can be called a church officer. If a pastor, or deacon, or any private Christian, had preached the gospel in destitute regions, while engaged in that work, he might have been styled an evangelist. If the evangelist is a church officer, his office is ab extra, and his most perfect counterpart is seen in one who superintends modern mission churches. Perhaps nothing more can be said than that the work of an evangelist was the exercise, in a special direction, of a single function of the pastoral office; or, at the best, that an evangelist was an ordained minister at large, who presided over no particular church. If it be asked why Paul mentions persons that are not permanent church officers with such as are, the answer is, that neither in Eph. iv. 11, nor in 1 Cor. xii. 28, was it his object to give a list of officers. In the first he mentions the ministries by

which the church is built up, and, in the second, the various spiritual gifts granted to the church, no one of which ought to be a cause of jealousy and strife, since they were all bestowed by the same Spirit.

II. The permanent officers of an apostolic church.

The officers necessary to the completeness of a local church are bishops or elders and deacons. These two orders alone are permanent. Paul mentions only these when he evidently gives a full list of church officers (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1–13). We shall speak,—

1. Of Bishops or Elders.

That bishop and elder were identical in the apostolic church is so clear that the best scholars of every denomination frankly admit it. No man could deny it after reading Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5–7;* 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, without sacrificing both candor and scholarship. The term elder was taken from the synagogue, and was specially adapted to the apprehension of Jewish converts, while bishop or overseer was drawn from the Greek, and was better suited to that of Gentiles. The former may point to the dignity of the office, the latter to its work. (See Litton's Church of Christ, p. 286; Gieseler's Church History, p. 90, note 1; Neander's Planting and Training, Robinson's translation, p. 147; Mosheim's Com. Vol. I. p. 162, note 1.)

The Presbyterian objects that there were two classes of elders, so distinct as to form two separate classes of officers, viz., preaching and ruling elders. This view rests almost exclusively on 1 Tim. v. 17, though Calvin quoted in its favor 1 Cor. xii. 18; Rom. xii. 8. I grant that *a* distinction is here made among elders, but the question is, is it a distinction of classes, or of different persons of the same class? Clearly the latter. The ordinary use of the word μάλιστα in the New Testament settles this. In Acts xxv. 26, Festus presents Paul before a company of civil officers, and says, "I brought him before you, and specially (*malista*) before thee, King Agrippa. The king was included in the "you," but was separated from it by *malista*. In the fourth chapter, tenth verse of the epistle, in which is the passage in dispute, Paul speaks of

* See Jerome's Commentary in loco. Baptist Quarterly, Vol. V. p. 180. Hunt on Religious Thought in England, Vol. I. pp. 118, 267–68.

God as the saviour of all men, especially (*malista*) of believers. Here again we have the special designation of persons included in a general class. So in v. 8, Paul says, "If any man provide not for his own, and especially (*malista*) for those of his own house," where "his own house" is only persons of the class designated by "his own." As this is the obvious force of "*malista*" in these passages, so is it in verse 17. Those elders that rule well are to have double honor, especially (*malista*) those among them who labor in word and doctrine. (Com. Gal. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 22; 2 Tim. iv. 13; Tit. i. 10; Philem. 16; 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10.)

Moreover, the word κοπιῶντες, translated in the passage "labor," means to work hard, to toil, to labor to exhaustion. Paul, therefore, seems to teach that those who gave themselves unremittingly to the work of their office were worthy of special honor. This accords with the fact that many churches had a plurality of elders (Acts xiv. 23; xv. 2, 4, 6, 22; xx. 17; Tit. i. 5; Jas. v. 14), some of whom, engaged in secular pursuits, may not have been disposed to give themselves wholly to their calling. (See The American Presbyterian and Theological Review for 1868, pp. 253, 506; Lightfoot's Christian Ministry, in his Commentary on the epistle to the Philippians, p. 193, note 3; Rothe's Anfänge, p. 224; Ritschl's Die Entstehung der Alt Katholischen Kirche, p. 352; Schaff's Apos. Hist. p. 312; Hunt on Religious Thought in Eng. Vol. I. p. 87.)

Yet we are not to infer from this that each church must now have a plurality of elders in order to be apostolic. There were genuine churches in Paul's day that for a time had no elders. But many of our churches now would be more efficient if they provided themselves with, at least, two elders. This was a common practice among the English Baptists. (See Ivimey's Hist. of the English Baptists, Vol. II. pp. 389, 397, 407, 529, 530, 538, 547, 552.)

But Bishops or Elders bore other names.

A. They are called shepherds or pastors. Christ is called the Shepherd of his followers (Matt. xxvi. 31; Jno. x. 11–16), and bishops who are his representatives (2 Cor. v. 20) bear his name. In 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, the elders or presbyters are commanded to do the work of shepherds or pastors. So, also, in Acts xx. 17, 28, the elders are exhorted not only to perform the duties of bishops, but

also of pastors. That bishop or elder and pastor are identical is confirmed by 1 Pet. ii. 25, where Christ is styled both shepherd and bishop. And as Paul mentions in Eph. iv. 11, the agencies by which the church is built up, and does not speak of elders or bishops, the principal permanent officers of the church, it is clear that he designates those officers by "pastors."

B. Bishops or elders are also styled teachers. This name is not appropriated to them exclusively. Paul applies it to himself, as an apostle (1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11), and the Hebrews as a body are told that they ought to be teachers (Heb. v. 12); yet it was often applied to bishops or elders, and pointed out an important function of their office (1 Tim. iii. 2). That "pastors or teachers," in Eph. iv. 11, designate the same class of officers, is generally admitted by competent commentators. (See Hodge, Meyer, DeWette.)

That teaching was sometimes a special gift of the Spirit does not set aside the above view, for men who were so endowed may have been chosen for pastors. In apostolic times, however, there were some whose only work was that of teaching, for which alone they were anointed. They exercised, in an extraordinary manner, under a special impulse of the Spirit, a prominent function of the pastoral office, while they were not, in any strict sense, regular church officers. (See Rom. xii. 6, 7; Neander's Planting and Training, Rob. translation, p. 35.)

C. That the leaders spoken of in Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24, are identical with bishops or pastors, is too obvious for comment.

D. They are called, in Rev. i. 20; ii. 1, 8, 12, etc., angels. An angel is one sent to announce some truth, or to do some special work (Matt. xi. 10; Luke ix. 52). The pastor of a church is sent by God to speak his truth to a body of believers. This fact shows how appropriately he may be designated as an angel.

It is objected,

(*a.*) That a pastor in no other portion of the New Testament, nor in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, is called an angel, and consequently that he cannot be so designated here.

This fact has some force, but is perhaps sufficiently explained by the consideration that while this designation of a pastor is unusual, it is in harmony with the general character of the unique

book in which it occurs. It should not, however, be overlooked that the name Malachi means messenger or angel of Jehovah, and Ephraem Syrus says that the prophet was so called by his countrymen, because they regarded him, on account of his pre-eminent devotion, as specially sent by God. John the Baptist also is styled the angel or messenger of Christ (Matt. xi. 10. Com. Mal. iii. 1); but John as well as Malachi belonged to the prophets of whom Christian preachers are the most exact counterpart under the present dispensation. Moreover, Christ himself is called in Malachi "The angel of the Covenant." We have already seen that as Christ is called a shepherd or pastor, so is also the apostolic bishop; it is possible that the same bishop or elder is, like Christ whom he represents, called an angel. And this appeal to the Old Testament can hardly be out of place, since the Revelation is so deeply colored with Old Testament imagery.

The argument is strengthened by an appeal to the synagogue on which the apostolic churches were, to some extent, modelled. Thus Lightfoot, as quoted by Jacob (Eccl. Pol. p. 100), says, "There was the *Public Minister of the Synagogue*, who prayed publicly, and took care about the reading of the Law, and sometimes preached, if there were not some other to discharge this office. This person was called the *Angel of the Church* and *Chazan* or *Bishop of the Congregation*."

(*b.*) It is said that a single angel is addressed in each of the seven epistles, while the churches generally, in apostolic times, had a plurality of elders; the discrepancy of these two facts is thought to be inconsistent with the supposition that the angel was a pastor.

We answer, that if each of the seven churches were presided over by several elders, which no one can show, he who by common consent was chief in any given presbytery might have been addressed. The objection by no means overturns the view against which it is urged.

(*c.*) It is asserted that the symbol of the stars would not be explained by another symbol, viz., the angels, since the symbol of the candle-sticks or lamp-stands has a literal interpretation.

That, in the Revelation, living beings are sometimes symbols is true, but that angel is here necessarily a symbol we cannot admit. Just as the seven lamp-stands are explained as being the seven

churches, so the seven stars are said to be the angels of the churches (Rev. i. 20). Since these explanations of John's vision are parts of the same sentence, we must conclude that "angels" are no more a symbol than "seven churches."

The difficult passage which speaks of the angels of the churches has received many interpretations, which, to a greater or less extent, have been shaped by the different ecclesiastical connections and views of their respective advocates. Origen, among the early interpreters, and Alford, of our day, both taught that the angels of the churches were veritable heavenly angels. Hooker (Eccl. Pol. Vol. II. p. 249) and Trench (Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches, p. 78) maintain that they were diocesan bishops, and the English Presbyterians that they were the presbyteries of the churches, or the moderators of the presbyteries. (See Hunt on Religious thought in Eng. Vol. I. p. 185.) Davidson contends that the angels were the personification of the characteristic spirit of each church (Eccl. Pol. of the N. T. p. 160), while, in spite of the plain declaration of the text that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, others have tried to show that these angels were the churches themselves viewed in their corporate capacity. Isaac Jennings, an English Independent, has hit upon a very plausible interpretation. He thinks that there were messengers sent from the seven churches to comfort John in his exile on Patmos, and that, directed by Christ, he addressed to them the seven epistles, which they bore back to their respective churches. (See Bib. Sac. Vol. XII. p. 346.)

2. Deacons, the second order of permanent church officers, must now claim our attention. Since, however, their existence in apostolic times, as a distinct class of officers devoted to the more secular work of the church, has been seriously questioned in our day, we will particularly note the evidence pertaining to the question thus raised.

If Paul, in 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, speaks of one class of church officers, it is reasonable to conclude that in verse 8 he speaks of another; for,

A. ὡσαύτως, which introduces "deacons" of verse 8 is used to separate classes from one another (ii. 9; Tit. ii. 2, 3, 6).

B. Qualifications are required of bishops which are not of

deacons. The former must be "apt to teach," or "apt in teaching" (verse 2), and also "able with sound teaching both to exhort and to refute the gainsayers" (Tit. i. 9), while no such demand is made of the latter; it is sufficient, in their case, if they hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Now there is scarcely a more radical difference, as to intellectual endowments, than that between him who possesses the gift of aptly communicating truth and him who is destitute of it. This conclusively shows that two distinct orders of officers are presented to us in the passage under consideration.

But it is objected,

(*a.*) That ἐπίσκοπον, in verse 2, has the article, while διακόνους, in verse 8, wants it. It is urged that the article in the first instance definitely points out the bishop as a church officer, while its absence in the second instance leaves *deacons* a general and indefinite term, which, by no means, clearly indicates a class of officers separate from the bishops. But the two cases are not parallel; one word is singular and the other plural; if both had been singular, both would, doubtless, have had the article; but, as it is, the latter is just as definite as the former, for the anarthrous plural is commonly used to designate classes of things which are well known. The Greek article is employed when a thing is not sufficiently definite without it; but when there can be no mistake in reference to the object named it is omitted. Its absence, therefore, especially when the substantive is in the plural, usually denotes the highest degree of definiteness. (See Winer, Gram. of the N. T. § 19.)

As exactly parallel cases we point to *presbyter* and *bishop* in v. 19; Tit. i. 5; 1 Pet. v. 1; Phil. i. 1. In the first passage we have the anarthrous singular, and in the rest the anarthrous plural. In the last bishops and deacons are conjoined, but both are without the article. Must we conclude that it is doubtful if there was an order of officers called bishops or presbyters, because we so frequently meet the words without the article? But if we cannot come to such a conclusion concerning bishops in Phil. i. 1, can we concerning deacons in the same passage?

(*b.*) It is moreover asserted (See Baptist Quarterly, Vol. III. p. 40), because διάκονος and its cognates express the generic idea of

service, and are used to designate all sorts of labor, from that of an Apostle of Christ to that of a household servant, that deacons could not have been a regular order of church officers, designed to perform a specific work. But this argument proves too much. *Apostolos*, *episcopos*, and *presbuteros* severally express generic ideas. If, then, deacons were not a regular order of church officers, because the word may denote one who does service of any kind, it follows from the same process of reasoning that there were no Apostles of Christ, because the word apostle means one sent by a superior on any kind of an errand, — that there were no bishops, since the word merely signifies overseers, — and that there were no elders, for that term primarily means simply old men.

(c.) Finally, in determining who are meant by deacons in verse 8, we are told that Paul (1 Cor. iii. 5; Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23) and his companions in the ministry (2 Cor. iii. 6), Apollos (1 Cor. iii. 5), Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21), Epaphras (Col. i. 7), and Timothy (1 Tim. iv. 6), are styled servants or deacons; hence these, with Paul at their head, are the persons intended. But if we are to reason in this way, why exclude from the number Phœbe, a minister of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. xvi. 1), or the civil ruler, a minister of God (Rom. xiii. 4), or Christ, a minister to the Jews (Rom. xv. 8), or those ministers of Satan, who were transformed as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. xi. 15)? The word standing by itself is too general to determine the kind of servants intended. So, whenever Paul uses it, he indicates by the connection the kind of minister meant. When we turn to Eph. iii. 7; 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6; 2 Cor. iii. 6; vi. 4; Eph. vi. 21; Col. i. 7, we find that these passages in their connections clearly show that the *ministers* spoken of were preachers of the gospel; but when we turn to 1 Tim. iii. 8, we discover no descriptive phrase attached to *deacons* to indicate that the ministers spoken of are preachers. Nor are they mentioned in their immediate relation to God, or Christ, or the gospel of Christ, but solely in relation to the church; and, as there is no intimation that they were preachers, which, judging by Paul's usual method, if they had been, would have been given, we conclude that they were servants in some other capacity, and that the argument by which some have attempted to identify them with Paul and his companions is baseless.

But that ye also may know my affairs and how I do Tychicus a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord shall make known to you all things Eph. VI. 21.

To fortify this conclusion, we notice that it would be very strange if Paul had mentioned bishops before himself and his preaching companions, — as his work and that of his coadjutors was superior to that of presbyters or bishops, — and that it would be still more strange if he had required of pastors aptness in teaching, while he demanded no such qualification for the preachers with whom he was himself associated, whose mission was to found and superintend the churches.

The above view best accords with the briefer and less explicit references to the same subject in other parts of the New Testament, e. g., Rom. xii. 7; 1 Pet. iv. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 28. Since the Apostles speak in these passages very explicitly of the different kinds of teachers in the church, it is plausible, at least, to interpret "ministry," "minister," and "helps," as referring to deacons and diaconal service.

If, however, we should throw out these passages as having nothing to do with the case, the salutation of the epistle to the Philippians (Phil. i. 1) is unquestionably in point. Bishops and deacons are here spoken of as the officers of the church at Philippi, so that in this instance deacons are certainly not preachers at large, like Paul and his companions, and the two classes of officers appear here in the same order as we find them in 1 Tim. iii. 2, 8.

Moreover, the vexed passage in Acts vi. perfectly harmonizes with the view which we here take of deacons. "The multitude of the disciples," as directed by the Apostles, chose seven men who should provide for the tables of the poor. The Apostles prayed and laid their hands on them, and thus set them apart publicly to their work.

Yet they are not called deacons, but are spoken of in Acts xxi. 8 as distinctively "the seven." Nothing, then, as to their official character can be determined by the name which they bore; that must be inferred solely from the work which they were expressly appointed to perform. It was not preaching. It was so secular that the Apostles could not do it without interfering with that most important of all labor, "the ministry of the word." It consisted in caring for the poor widows of the church, or in so caring for all the poor that not even the foreign widows should be neg-

lected. Now this corresponds to the representation in the Pastoral Epistles. Just as the Apostles here must give themselves wholly to prayer and preaching, so there the bishop must be "apt to teach," and "able to refute the gainsayers." Although the work of deacons is not pointed out in Timothy, their case is so put that we see that they were not required to teach; if not, they must, in some way, have devoted themselves to the temporalities of the church, which, in the apostolic day, consisted mainly in the care of the sick and poor. We conclude, therefore, though, in the beginning of the apostolic era, those who performed diaconal work were not yet distinctively called deacons, that the seven were in reality the beginning of that order of church officers.

Some, however, have maintained that the seven were elders, for the following reasons:—

(*a.*) Two of them, Stephen and Philip, preached, and the latter is called an evangelist (Acts xxi. 8).

We reply, that Stephen is not called a preacher, yet he is specially mentioned as full of the Holy Spirit (Acts vi. 5), and his utterances are particularly attributed to the Spirit (verse 10). As the face of Moses shone with preternatural lustre when he came from immediate personal intercourse with Jehovah, so the countenance of Stephen was lighted up with unearthly radiance when he stood before the Sanhedrim, showing that he was under special divine influence. His bold, clear utterances of the truth, therefore, may be attributed to one of those special *charisms* so common in the early church.

But if this consideration is without force, we notice that it would have been entirely consonant with the spirit of the apostolic churches for a deacon to herald the glad tidings. The laymen of those churches generally performed this work according to their ability and opportunities (Acts viii. 4). And if a deacon had gone from place to place, preaching the gospel, he would probably have been called an evangelist; or, if Philip was specially set apart as a preacher, he was by no means the last deacon who has stepped from the lower to the higher order of the ministry.

(*b.*) It is also urged that, if the seven were deacons, we have a particular account of the election and ordination of the deacons of

the mother church, while nothing is said of the election and ordination of its elders. This is regarded as extremely improbable.

But why? We have no account of the choice and ordination of elders in any church of Macedonia or Achaia, or in the church of Rome, or in the seven churches of Asia, to say nothing of the churches of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Nevertheless, we do find references to the elders of several of these churches. When, however, the seven were chosen, there were probably no elders in the church at Jerusalem, because none were yet demanded; several, if not all of the Apostles, were still there doing the work of elders. If the elders had been chosen before, or when the seven were, they would have been thrust upon the church when there was no necessity for them.

(*c.*) Finally it is said that in the church at Jerusalem the elders, instead of the deacons, had the care of the poor. This is shown by the fact that the church of Antioch sent its contribution for the brethren of Judea to the elders (Acts xi. 30).

But the elders of the churches of Judea are here referred to, and not those of Jerusalem alone (verse 29). Contributions would naturally be sent to them since they were the highest officers of the churches, rather than to those inferior in rank; but this comes far short of showing that it officially devolved on them to distribute the gifts received.

Moreover, as preaching the gospel is confessedly the chief work of an elder, if the seven were elders, their capacity for labor must have been superior to that of the Apostles, who felt that they were unable to care for the poor without trenching on their higher duty of preaching the word.

The view that the seven were deacons is confirmed by early tradition. Irenaeus holds that they were deacons; and in the third century, when the church of Rome had forty elders, she had only seven deacons in imitation of the church at Jerusalem (see Schaffs' Apos. Church p. 532), and the Council of Neocæsarea (A. D. 315) ordained that no city should have more than seven deacons, basing its decree on apostolic example. (See Lightfoot's Philippians, p. 186.)

That bishops and deacons were different orders in the ministry is sustained by the representations of the Apostolic Fathers. We

can barely refer to their testimony. (See 1 Ep. of Clement, Ch. 42; Ep. of Polycarp, Ch. 5, Ignatius passim.)

We find also a remarkable confirmation of the above view in Justin Martyr, First Apology, Chs. 65 and 67, where we have a picture of the administration of the Lord's Supper, the counterpart of which is witnessed in Congregational and Baptist churches, whenever they commemorate the death of Christ. Justin distinguishes the president or pastor from the deacons. The former utters his thanksgiving over the bread and the wine; the latter distribute them among the communicants.

(For additional testimony, see Bingham's Christian Antiquities, Vol. I. pp. 213, 214. For the views of the Reformers of the sixteenth century, see Herzog's R. E. Band III. S. 368.)

But in the apostolic diaconate there were two branches, the male and the female. Having noted the former, we will now consider the latter. In collating the evidence of its existence we turn,

A. To 1 Tim. iii. 11: "Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."

(*a.*) Some maintain that "*women*," of verse 11, means the wives of the deacons; but in the verse itself there is no such intimation; "their wives" of the common version being an interpretation, not a translation. *Γυνή*, to be sure, sometimes designates a wife; but whenever it does, the immediate connection reveals the fact. It is so used in verse 12, but there the word which it limits makes its import perfectly clear. As, however, an entirely new thought is introduced by that verse, we cannot reason from it back to verse 11.

(*b.*) Moreover, if "*women*" designates the deacons' wives, then verse 11, which names their qualifications, is thrust into the midst of the passage which presents to us the deacons and their qualifications. This makes the construction so harsh that we may well doubt if such an interpretation be really correct.

(*c.*) Still more decisive is the objection that Paul would not have mentioned the wives of deacons, and omitted all reference to to those of bishops. Necessarily bishops' wives must always hold a more prominent place in the estimation of a church than those of deacons', and their influence, other things being equal, is consequently greater. If it were necessary to insist that the character

of deacons' wives should be praiseworthy, it would be still more necessary to demand a like character in those of bishops.

(*d.*) Furthermore, unless we regard verse 11 as simply good advice, such an interpretation would exclude any man from the diaconate, no matter how well qualified for its duties, if his wife did not possess the requisite character; while no one, for the same reason, would be debarred from the higher office of bishop. This seems to be absurd.

It is less objectionable to regard the "women" of verse 11 as deaconesses. They are introduced by ὡσαύτως, just as the deacons are in verse 8. As deacons are distinguished from bishops, so are the "*women*" from deacons. Yet ὡσαύτως determines nothing as to the subordination or co-ordination of the classes distinguished by it. The bishop's ability to teach shows that he is superior in rank to deacons; but the qualifications of deacons and the "*women*" are to a considerable extent identical, and there is nothing in the difference of their qualifications which shows any official superiority of the one over the other. We conclude, therefore, that "*deacons*" of verse 8, and "*women*" of verse 11, are coordinate branches of the same office. We may, then, regard verse 12 as setting forth what deacons should be in their domestic relations, and verse 13 as presenting a motive to faithfulness in their official duties; or we may adopt Chrysostom's interpretation, and consider verse 12 not as alone applicable to deacons of verse 8, but as applying equally to both branches of the diaconate. On that supposition the masculine includes the feminine. This interpretation presents in perfect unity all that Paul here writes of church officers, which fact alone must commend it above any other which breaks the passage into incoherent fragments.

As illustrative of the above interpretation, see Apos. Cons. B. III. ch. 19.

B. An additional evidence that there were deaconnesses in the apostolic church is found in 1 Tim. v. 3–16.

The main object of the Apostle in this passage is to point out what widows a Christian church ought to sustain by its charities. There are certain widows, whom such a church is not bound thus to support. They have no just claim for maintenance, who, by their wantonness or voluptuousness, show that they are destitute of spir-

itual life (verse 6). Even those whose conduct is irreproachable, if they have children or more distant relatives, they must look to them for succor (verse 4), that the church may not be burdened (verse 16). This the Apostle enforces, by declaring that they who will not provide for the destitute among their dependents, and in their households, have denied the faith, and are worse than an unbeliever (verse 8). On the other hand there are "*widows indeed*" (verse 3). These have no relatives to whom they can look for aid, so they especially set their hope on God, and continue "in supplications and prayers night and day" (verse 5). Among these were some, who, for some purpose, were enrolled or put on the list (*καταλεγέσθω*). Who were they?

(*a.*) Some have maintained that only those put on the list were to be supported by charity.

To this, however, it is decisively objected, that those who did not possess the qualifications for enrolment enumerated in verses 9 and 10 might be as needy as those who did possess them, and in some instances even more so, and to deny them aid because they had not been quite as diligent in Christian labor as others, or were not threescore years old, would be so unreasonable and unchristian, that we cannot for a moment admit that the Apostle ever commanded it.

(*b.*) A better interpretation is, that some of the widows to be supported were enrolled for diaconal service, and were probably deaconesses. If the church sustained them, why should it not expect some service in return from those best qualified to render it? That this is probably the true view becomes apparent from the qualifications demanded of those who were put on the list. No one of them must be under sixty years of age. They must have that wisdom which many years of service alone can bestow. Moreover, they seem to have voluntarily pledged themselves not to marry (verses 11, 12). It would not be suitable for one engaged in the service of the church to be encumbered with family cares, and a widow of sixty would ordinarily be freed from all temptation to enter into wedlock. Those put on the list were also required to be monogamists, the qualification demanded in the third chapter of both deacons and deaconesses, if we adopt Chrysostom's interpretation. It was, moreover, essential that they

should have a reputation for good works, the experience acquired in the training of children, and the habit of hospitality. They must also have been inured to the most menial services on behalf of the saints, and to the work of relieving the afflicted; in short, they must have diligently followed every good work. Now, if we consider those enrolled as set apart to diaconal service, these qualifications are entirely fitting; and, as this interpretation so naturally meets all the demands of the passage, we think it correct.

We need not, however, suppose that all the deaconesses of the apostolic church were widows of sixty years and upwards. There were many women who labored with Paul; and whether they were regularly appointed deaconesses or not, they certainly performed, to a greater or less extent, diaconal service. Some of them were not widows, and we have no evidence that they were aged women. So, belonging to the diaconate of the same church, there may have been not only widows, but also virgins, and even married women, who were childless, or whose children had grown up so as to leave them comparatively free from domestic care. If the persons thus rendering official service had no need of charity, the service was probably gratuitous.

If it be said that a woman sixty years of age is too old for a deaconess, it is sufficient to reply that many of our most efficient female workers are sixty and upwards, and deaconesses of that age are not unknown in modern times. (See Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Art. Deaconess.)

C. We find still another evidence in Rom. xvi. 1, that there were deaconesses in the apostolic church. Paul commends Phœbe, "who is a deaconess of the church which is at Cenchrea." Neander found in this passage an explicit reference to the female diaconate (Plant. and Train. Rob's trans. p. 155). Some indeed think that *διάκονον* should be rendered servant, instead of deaconess, and that there is no evidence that Phœbe was anything more than some prominent woman, who efficiently served, not as an office-bearer, but as a private Christian, the church to which she belonged. But Paul's language naturally applies only to an official personage. Phœbe was a servant of a particular church in a sense which distinguished her from its other members. The most natural

interpretation, therefore, of the passage in hand is that it represents her as a deaconess. This being true, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Mary, who bestowed much labor on Paul and his co-workers (verse 6), and Tryphæna, Tryphosa, and the beloved Persis, who "labored much in the Lord" (verse 12), were also deaconesses at Rome. If the little church at Cenchrea had a deaconess, it is fair to conclude that the larger churches, in the great cities, had a still greater number of women filling the same office.

D. Our interpretation of the passages of Scripture now examined is sustained by the practice and testimony of the early churches. Pliny the younger, in the first decade of the second century, when he was proprætor of Bythinia, examined, by torture, two Christian female servants who were called deaconesses (ministræ), (Letters, X. 97). Ignatius (Smyr. c. 13) salutes "virgins who are called widows." Hefele's comment on this is, "Deaconesses, although they might be *virgins*, were, nevertheless, called *widows*, because, in the primitive times of the church, widows were customarily chosen to the office of deaconesses." This view of Hefele is confirmed by Tertullian (Tert. De Virg. c. 9), who identifies deaconesses and widows, and classes the latter with church officers (Ad. Uxor. Lib. I. c. 7). In the Pastor of Hermas (Lib. I. Vis. 2, c. 4) Grapte is mentioned as one who would admonish the widows and orphans. The author seems to conceive of her as one accustomed to such work. Clement of Alexandria (Paed. III. 12, § 97) says, there are in Holy Scripture innumerable commands appertaining to chosen persons, "some to presbyters, some to bishops, some to deacons, others to *widows*." That he regarded widows as church officers is clear from the way in which he here mentions them. He also refers to what Paul says concerning "*female deacons*," in the Second Epistle of Timothy (Stromata III. c. 6, § 53). He refers, by mistake, to the wrong epistle, yet his words not only show that the female diaconate existed in his day, but also that he believed it to be founded on apostolic teaching. Jerome, in his commentaries, identifies the deaconesses of the early churches and the women referred to in Rom. xvi. 1 and 1 Tim. iii. 11.*

* (Rom. xvi. 1) Sicut etiam nunc in Orientalibus diaconissæ mulieres in suo sexu ministrare videntur in baptismo, sive in ministerio verbi. (1 Tim.

It should be noted, however, that in post-apostolic times there were widows who were supported by charity, and who did not belong to the ministry of the churches; but every unbiassed reader must admit that the early writers refer to others who formed a part of that ministry and were deaconesses.

E. Was there any necessity in apostolic times which called this branch of the diaconate into being? Yes. Women in all Greek communities lived in strict seclusion, just as they do now in Mohammedan countries. On this account, Paul was assisted by women in preaching the gospel. We must so interpret Phil. iv. 3: "Help those women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also." They went from house to house, making known the glad tidings to those from whom the Apostle was excluded. The deacons of the churches planted where such customs prevailed, could not enter into houses to care for females who were suffering from sickness or poverty without scandalizing, in the eyes of the heathen, the churches which they served. To meet this necessity, the labors of suitable women were demanded. At first they may not have been regarded as church officers, but as their services were constantly required, they were finally considered a part of the diaconate, and were probably regularly chosen by the churches for their work.

Deaconesses lingered in the Eastern churches for thirteen centuries, and, though the West was unfriendly to them, they did not disappear there until the eleventh century. The causes of their final extinction are apparent. In post-apostolic times one duty of the deaconesses was to prepare candidates of their own sex for baptism, and to assist them when the ordinance was administered. But as sprinkling gradually supplanted immersion, their occupation in this respect finally disappeared. The principal cause of their extinction, however, was monasticism. It was thought that special sanctity could be secured by a secluded life, and just those women who were destitute of family cares and specially qualified for deaconesses were shut up in the cloister, where a life of contemplation was regarded as the supreme good, rather than one of outward activity for others. (On the efforts of the early English

iii. 11) Similiter eas ut diacones eligi jubet; unde intelligatur quod de his dicat, quas adhuc hodie in Oriente diaconissas appellant.

Independents to revive the Female Diaconate, see Smith's Dic. Art. Deaconess. Neal's History of the Puritans, Harper's Ed. Vol. I. p. 140. Ludlow's Woman's Work in the Church, pp. 196–200.)

Ought we not to revive the female branch of the diaconate in its apostolic simplicity? We have many females in our churches who might become efficient laborers in this office. What they could achieve for Christ is shown by their ministrations in army hospitals during the more recent wars. Should not this force, so far as possible, be used in ministering to the poor and sick of our towns and cities? Some women in the churches could and would gladly labor without compensation; but poor women, who now lean on the needle for a precarious support, might be maintained by the churches so that they could devote all their time to charitable labor.

CHAPTER V.

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF CHURCH OFFICERS.

I. The Duties and Qualifications of Bishops or Elders.

1. Their Duties.

(*a.*) Their chief duty is to preach the gospel. For this work above every other are they chosen. Those of them who toil hard in the word and teaching are worthy of the highest honor (1 Tim. v. 17). Teaching is so important an element of preaching, that the bishop is called a teacher (Eph. iv. 11). Timothy in the same breath is commanded to preach the word, and to exhort with teaching (2 Tim. iv. 2), and, in another passage, to give attention to exhortation and teaching (1 Tim. iv. 13). If there be any distinction between preaching and teaching, it is that the former refers to the heralding of the glad tidings, a work in which every believer, according to his ability and opportunities, is expected to engage; while the latter designates the more formal and systematic unfolding of the truth. But no one was deemed fit for a bishop who was not "apt in teaching" (1 Tim. iii. 2), and able to defend effectively the doctrines of the gospel against all who may oppose them (Tit. i. 9).

But the bishop has a twofold character. On the one hand, he is simply a preacher of the gospel. Wherever he may go, whatever relations he may sustain, he must always regard himself as one specially called to herald the truth. On the other hand, he takes the oversight of a particular church, he becomes the pastor of a single congregation, and out of this special relation grow special duties.

In virtue of his character as preacher, he is called to proclaim the gospel to the unregenerate who may be attracted to his ministrations. If, as already said, it is the duty of every Christian, according to his ability, to make known to others the truth as it is in Christ, the Christian pastor, who has more than ordinary capacity for such labor, is most imperatively bound to perform it. In this

respect the Apostles are his example. When they tarried for a considerable period in any one place, they performed the work of bishops or elders. During that period they took the oversight of a particular church (Acts xi. 26; xviii. 11; xx. 20, 21, 31). Evidently for this reason Peter called himself an elder (1 Pet. v. 1), and John so designates himself (2 Jno. 1; 3 Jno. 1), probably because in his old age he was caring, or helping care, for some church in Asia Minor. When the Apostles so labored, it is clear, from the passages in the Acts referred to above, that they earnestly preached to the unconverted. In this respect the bishop can and should be a true successor of the Apostles.

But, on the other hand, as the bishop has the oversight of a particular church, he is bound in a special manner to preach to it. His ministry, as well as that of apostles, prophets, and evangelists, is designed to perfect the saints in knowledge and holiness, and to build up the church in all that pertains to Christian character. It is specially enjoined upon him to tend as a shepherd, or to feed the flock or church over which he is placed (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2). This he can do only by preaching to them the word. The babes in Christ, those just born of the Spirit, must be fed with milk, the simplest truths of the gospel; while those who are ready to leave its first principles, or who have already reached the higher stages of Christian experience, must be fed with strong meat, the higher, profounder truths of God's word.

(*b.*) It is also reasonable to conclude that the Christian pastor should administer the ordinances. If persons are converted under his preaching, it would seem to be most fitting that he should baptize them, and who could so appropriately administer the Lord's Supper to the church over which he is placed? Yet the New Testament affords no very clear testimony on this point, perhaps because none is really needed. This may be one of those things which are left to the discretion of the churches.

We are not told who baptized those converted on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). As, however, Philip baptized the eunuch (viii. 38), he probably also baptized those converted under his preaching in Samaria (verse 12); but there is no evidence that he was anything more than a zealous deacon engaged in heralding the glad tidings. If Ananias baptized Paul (ix. 18), we have no evi-

dence that he was either an elder or a deacon (xxii. 12). We are not informed who baptized the converts at Cæsarea (x. 48). Paul or Silas, doubtless, baptized Lydia and her household (xvi. 14, 15), and the jailer and his household (verse 33), but who baptized the first converts at Corinth (xviii. 8) no one can determine from the record. Paul baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. i. 14, 15); the rest may have received the ordinance at the hands of Aquila, or Silas, or Timothy, or some one not named in the history. It is equally uncertain who rebaptized those mentioned in Acts xix. 5.

If we turn to the Gospels we find that John the Baptist immersed those that repented under his preaching, but Christ personally baptized none (Jno. iv. 2). But did not the Great Commission (Matt. xxviii. 19) make it the exclusive duty of the Apostles to baptize? No. This commission was given after the Lord's interview with Thomas; there was no one of the eleven who any longer doubted the resurrection of Christ, yet verse 17 says "some doubted." Others besides the eleven must have been present, perhaps the "above five hundred brethren" mentioned by Paul. If the Apostles were to be prominent in carrying out the commission it was by no means confined to them.

We have, then, in the Scriptures no explicit evidence that it is one of the special duties of elders to baptize; but, as baptism was administered by John the Baptist, who, as a prophet, answers to the preacher of that dispensation which he declared to be at hand, and as baptism in the apostolic churches was either administered by the Apostles, who preached the saving word, or by some one under their direction, it is at least very appropriate that those converted through the preaching of a Christian pastor should be baptized by him. As, however, in apostolic times, when the circumstances were peculiar, deacons or prominent laymen administered baptism, in similar circumstances they may with propriety administer the same ordinance now.

As to the Lord's Supper, there is no evidence that, in the apostolic day, it was administered exclusively either by the Apostles or the elders. It probably was frequently administered by them, since such a duty would be naturally performed by those most prominent in the churches; but the references in Acts ii. 42, 46;

xx. 7–11; 1 Cor. x. 16, are too general and vague to determine with certainty who were accustomed to break bread in the apostolic churches. We may, however, reasonably infer that, in the New Testament churches, the administration of the ordinances was not confined exclusively to church officers. If a church were destitute of bishops and deacons, probably one of its members, designated by the rest, administered the ordinances; and churches now, which may be unable to obtain the services of ordained preachers, ought not on that account to omit the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.*

(*c.*) It is the pastor's duty to direct and lead all the religious enterprises of his church. This is sufficiently clear from the names which he bears. He is called an "overseer," and a "leader." He cannot, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, arbitrarily direct his church, but he should do it by that personal influence arising from his relation to Christ, his purity of character, and good works.

(*d.*) It is incumbent on him also to devote a portion of his time to pastoral work, technically so called. This is certainly implied in the Scripture which makes it his duty to "take care of the church" (1 Tim. iii. 5). The relation which he sustains to his

* It is clear, from the New Testament, that the Apostles laid far greater stress on preaching the word than on administering the ordinances. To be sure, they insisted on their administration to all believers, and the action of the churches, under their direction, shows the order in which baptism and the Lord's Supper should be observed; but the Apostles were indifferent as to whether they were the administrators or not. Paul said that he was not sent to baptize, but to preach the gospel. On the other hand, they declared their determination to give themselves wholly to the ministry of the word and to prayer. Wherever they went they preached incessantly. So also they made it the undoubted duty of bishops or elders to preach. That it is also fitting for them to administer the ordinances is clear enough, as we have seen from the position which they hold, but it is not directly and positively enjoined, as in the case of preaching. The churches must never neglect the ordinances, yet discretion is evidently allowed as to who shall administer them; but it is the pre-eminent *duty* of bishops to *preach the word*. Thus that churchism which makes the Lord's Supper the central act of all Christian worship, and throws preaching into the background, as if it were of little importance, and confines the administration of the ordinances to the higher orders of its hierarchical clergy, has no basis whatever in the New Testament.

church is very intimate and tender. There is not a member of it for whose religious welfare he should not be deeply solicitous. Since he can often best touch and develop the spiritual life of those committed to his care by visiting them in their homes, he should not fail to do this. As he must watch for souls as one who is to give a strict account, he should look after those of his congregation who are convicted of sin, that he may lead them to faith in Christ. Moreover, he cannot neglect to visit the aged, the infirm, and the sick of his congregation and church, and be guiltless. We shall soon see that the duty of caring for the bodily wants of the poor belongs especially to the deacons, but no genuine pastor, who seeks the highest good of his flock, will wholly neglect to minister in their homes to their spiritual necessities. Chaucer drew to the life such a pastor residing in the country: —

> "Wide was his cure; the houses far asunder,
> Yet never fail'd he, or for rain or thunder,
> Whenever sickness or mischance might call,
> The most remote to visit, great or small,
> And, staff in hand, on foot, the storm to brave."

The manner of performing these labors will be pointed out in my lectures on "Pastoral Duties."

2. The Qualifications of Bishops or Elders.

(*a.*) Nothing is directly said concerning their intellectual qualifications; but that a bishop should not be ignorant and destitute of mental discipline is clear from the work which he is called to perform. How could one, who is intellectually untrained and unfurnished, expound the Scriptures, and present in their true relations and just proportions the doctrines of the Bible? The need of discipline and knowledge is also involved in the exhortations of Paul to Timothy, when he was doing the work of an elder at Ephesus (1 Tim. iv. 15, 16; 2 Tim. ii. 15). But whatever intellectual qualification a bishop may lack, he must have the power of teaching aptly, of so communicating truth as to interest and edify others (1 Tim. iii. 2), and he must also be able to refute those who oppose the truth (Tit. i. 9). To do this, in our day, requires the most thorough discipline, and a broad acquaintance with, at least, the *results* of philosophical and scientific investigations.

(*b.*) Of the moral qualifications of bishops or elders, Paul speaks most explicitly. This shows their pre-eminent importance. However perfect a man's discipline, and however broad his knowledge, he is unfit to preach the gospel unless his character is unsullied. He must be "blameless;" his deportment such that no one can justly accuse him. He is required to be "sober" and "temperate;" all of his appetites and passions under restraint. He must be "discreet." This refers to that which is within. In disposition he must be the opposite of rash, imprudent, headstrong. Paul demands that he should be "orderly" in his outward conduct; that must correspond to the inward disposition. He must be "a lover of the good" wherever found either in men or things, and also sound in doctrine. Finally, he is required to be "just" and "holy." These two words show how he should act towards men, and live before God (1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7, 8, 9.)

The Apostle also sets before us what an elder must not be. He must not be "given to wine;" in the habit of tarrying by, or over, the wine-cup. Nor must he be a "striker." This may refer to the fact that he who is partially intoxicated with wine is liable to strike his companions. The general meaning is, that an elder must not, from any cause, be quarrelsome, but rather "gentle" or "forbearing," "averse to strife," shunning all needless contention (1 Tim. iii. 3). Moreover, he must not be "self-willed" or "arrogant;" he must not seek to gratify himself regardless of others; nor must he permit himself to be "soon angry," irascible, easily irritated and thrown off his balance (Tit. i. 7). He is forbidden to be "a lover of money," or "to be greedy of gain" (1 Tim. iii. 3; Tit. i. 7). Such a passion is, in itself, most base and corrupting; and, if cherished by an elder, he might be led to preach for gain rather than to save souls and to honor Christ. It should be noted that the leading disqualifications for the ministry, presented by Paul, are intemperance, pride, passionateness and avarice.

He must, also, be an example in all his domestic relations and acts. It was necessary to guard against some things in Paul's day, to which, happily, we are no longer exposed. He was compelled to warn Timothy against permitting any to be bishops except monogamists (1 Tim. iii. 2). If any man, before his conversion, had been carried away with the loose morals of the times,

and for some unscriptural reason had divorced his wife and then married another, he must not be made a bishop. Tried by the word of God, he was a polygamist, and as such conduct was disreputable even in the eyes of the better heathen, to make such a man a church officer, though he had thoroughly repented, would have scandalized the church. (See Conybeare and Howson, Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Vol. II. p. 452. Hovey's Scriptural Law of Divorce, p. 64.)

Moreover, he must so preside over his household that his children will be in becoming subjection (1 Tim. iii. 4); for, if he is not equal to this lesser duty, how can he perform the greater duty of caring for God's church? He must, also, be "hospitable" (iii. 2. Comp. Heb. xiii. 2; Rom. xii. 13), ready to entertain Christian strangers.

The Apostle names two more qualifications which cannot be classed with the foregoing. An elder must not be a neophyte, — a recent convert, — lest, puffed up with pride, on account of his sudden elevation, he should fall into condemnation like that into which the devil fell through like conceit (iii. 6).

Finally, he must have an unsullied reputation among those who are not members of the church, lest, reproached by them, he may yield to the temptation of the devil, and abandon his profession of Christianity. To this reason of the Apostle, we may add that, without such a reputation, the elder could have little or no salutary influence over the unconverted.

It is true that some of the above qualifications may have been insisted on by Paul in view of the peculiar character and condition of the early churches, especially of those in Crete; but, in substance, these qualifications are universal, and without them no one should be deemed fit for the pastoral office in any country or in any age of the world.

II. The Duties and Qualifications of Deacons.

1. Their Duties.

(*a.*) Guided by Acts vi., we must conclude that the chief duty of deacons is to care for the poor of the church, to provide for their tables; and if the widows of 1 Tim. v. 9, who were put on the list, were expected, so far as they were able, to perform diaconal service, judging from the experience in works of charity demanded of them, we must conclude that the same duty belonged

to the female branch of the diaconate. And whenever, in post-apostolic history, the duties of deacons are mentioned, this duty of caring for the poor is almost invariably most prominent.

(*b.*) They are not, however, restricted to this alone. The term deacon means a helper, and in Acts vi. they were to care for the poor in order to relieve the Apostles from that labor. Thus they helped them to preach the gospel. A deacon, being the helper of his pastor, should always be ready to relieve him, so far as possible, of every burden which hinders him from giving himself wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Moreover, while it is the main work of the deacons, both male and female, to care for the bodily wants of the poor and sick, yet, since they are Christian laborers, they are bound, so far as they are able, to preach to them the gospel. Thus they minister to both body and soul, and, in the highest and best sense, become coworkers with, and helpers of, the elder or elders with whom they are associated. (See Bunsen's Hippolytus, Vol. III. pp. 230, 231.)

2. The Qualifications of Deacons.

We learn from the words of the Apostles, in Acts vi. 3, that a deacon should be thoroughly pious. The seven were to be "full of the Holy Spirit." Moreover, this piety should be linked with wisdom. The seven were to be filled with it as well as with the Spirit. The wisdom here referred to, whether a gift of the Spirit, or a natural endowment, appears to be good judgment, discretion, sound sense, which would help them to care for the poor with judiciousness and tact.

We need not wonder that such qualifications are required in deacons; by their piety they would commend the gospel to any in the households visited by them who had not yet received it, and would be able to instruct more perfectly those who had believed, or to comfort them when despondent under trials. If one ever needs the help of the Spirit it is when engaged in such duties, that he may be able to discern rightly the mental and spiritual condition of the afflicted, and to speak the fitting word; and if a man ever needs wisdom it is in distributing to the necessities of the poor, that he may grant relief just where it is most needed, and withhold it from the unworthy, who may be most clamorous for it,

that he may give even to the truly needy so as not to pamper them in idleness, but to encourage in them self-reliance and industry, and also so delicately as not to wound those who possess sensitive natures, and are of a manly, independent spirit.

With the foregoing general and comprehensive qualifications of deacons accord the more minute specifications of Paul in 1 Tim. iii. 8–12. He teaches that deacons must be "grave," dignified in conduct, or reputable in deportment in all the relations of life (Comp. Phil. iv. 8.) They must, also, be sincere and truthful, "not double-tongued," not saying one thing and meaning another, or not saying, concerning the same thing, one thing to these, another to those. Temperance in the use of wine is also required. Nor must they be "greedy of gain," lest they should appropriate to their own purposes the money or goods entrusted to them for the poor.

As to their inner, spiritual life, they must hold "the mystery of the faith," the doctrine of the gospel apprehended by faith, "in a pure conscience," a conscience undefiled by greed, or any unholy act or lust.

Moreover, they must be examples in their domestic life. Like elders, they were required to be monogamists, and also to preside well over their own households, their children and servants, having such obedience and order that their families might be models worthy of imitation; but, as they were not overseers, the ruling of their households was not made a test, as in the case of bishops, of their ability to preside over the church. In short, they must be "without reproach," as to their moral character, faith, or domestic life. And this demand, in Paul's letter, that they should be "without reproach," or "blameless," answers to the demand of the Apostles in reference to the seven, that they should be men of "good repute" (Acts vi. 3.)

Several of the qualifications required of those belonging to this branch of the diaconate are also required of those belonging to the other. The deaconesses, in like manner, must be dignified in deportment, and the wives of one husband (1 Tim. v. 9). If the male deacon must not be given to much wine, the female deacon must be "sober," must ever keep herself under such restraint as to avoid all excesses.

But some qualifications peculiar to her are named. She must not be a "slanderer;" and, if the enrolled widows of v. 9 performed diaconal service, she must have an inclination and aptitude for works of charity, and experience in them; and, to crown the whole, she must be "faithful in all things," must be one who is accustomed to perform the duties which belong to every relation which she sustains, with strict fidelity.

CHAPTER VI.

ELECTION AND ORDINATION OF CHURCH OFFICERS.

I. They were chosen by the suffrages of the entire church.

(1.) The whole company of disciples at Jerusalem participated in selecting a successor to Judas (Acts i. 15). The one hundred and twenty were not yet organized into a church; but if, when unorganized, and under the direction of an Apostle, they assisted in choosing an Apostle, how much more when organized would they be expected to elect inferior officers. The incident presents the apostolic idea of the manner of elections in the early church.

The transaction has, however, both a divine and a human side. The brethren of verse 15 appointed two (verse 23) for the office (DeWette), and then prayed that the Lord would indicate which of the two was his choice (verse 24). To determine Christ's will they resorted to the lot. (Com. 1 Chron. xxiv.; Lev. xvi. 8.) The names Barsabas and Matthias probably were written on pieces of parchment (their lots, αὐτῶν or lots for them, αὐτοῖς), which were placed in an urn, and the slip first drawn out showed the Lord's decision. (For a different view see Mosheim's Com. Vol. I. pp. 103, 104.)

(2.) The whole church at Jerusalem chose the seven. The Apostles might have appointed them, but they never overrode the privileges of a church; hence they laid the work on "the multitude of the disciples" (Acts vi. 2, 3), and the "whole multitude" performed it (verse 5). This choice was confirmed by the Apostles (verse 3.)

(3.) That the entire body of a church chose its officers is confirmed by the fact that messengers, for various purposes, were thus chosen (Acts xv. 22, 27; 2 Cor. viii. 19).

It is objected that Titus was commanded to appoint elders in the cities of Crete (Tit. i. 5). But such an act, on his part, would have been consistent with their election by the churches, just as the appointment of deacons, by the Apostles, succeeded

their election by the church (Acts vi. 3). The Greek word is the same in both passages. Yet, if he appointed elders without the consent of the churches, which is improbable, as such a course would have been contrary to the usual procedure of the Apostles, it would not furnish a precedent for us, since Titus was the Apostles' agent, and went to his work clothed with apostolic authority. No man can be thus invested now.

Neander says, "Although, when St. Paul empowers Titus to set presiding officers over the communities that possessed the requisite qualifications, *this circumstance* decides nothing as to the mode of choice, nor is a choice by the community itself thereby necessarily excluded." (Com. Clement, 1 Ep. c. 44.)

Acts xiv. 23, "And having appointed for them elders in every church," is sometimes quoted, to prove that the officers of the apostolic churches were chosen by popular suffrage. But this is to weaken a position naturally strong, by a passage which affirms nothing in reference to it.

The primary meaning of *χειροτονέω* is to stretch forth the hand, as men often did in Athens to express a choice, or a decision; hence it signified to vote by stretching forth the hand; but in New Testament times, it was not used in its root sense, and denoted merely choice or appointment (Acts x. 41), without respect to the mode. Moreover, in the passage before us the act expressed by it is predicated only of Paul and Barnabas, not of those for whom the act was performed. If, then, it has its radical meaning here, only the two Apostles are declared to have voted, which is absurd. In 2 Cor. viii. 19, we have the same word, where certain messengers are said to have been "appointed" by the churches; but the mode of the appointment is not even here designated. All that the passage in Acts xiv. 23 teaches, then, is that the Apostles appointed elders. That they did this without the consent of the churches is very improbable. The eleven did not even choose an Apostle to complete their own number without consulting the whole body of believers at Jerusalem, and it would be strange if Paul and Barnabas had appointed elders over churches without their consent. Such an act would be contrary to the deference universally shown by the Apostles to the wishes of the churches. That they had the right to make such appointments

is admitted; yet, if they exercised it, their example cannot be followed, as they acted with apostolic authority, which no man has since possessed.

It is true that the scriptural testimony in reference to the manner of electing church officers is not copious; but as it all points in one direction, as there is no opposing evidence whatever, it is as conclusive as if it were much more abundant. In the light of this testimony there can be no reasonable doubt that the officers of the apostolic churches were chosen by popular vote. (See Neander's Church Hist. Vol. I. p. 189. Mosheim's Com. Vol. I. p. 164.)

II. The Ordination of Church Officers.

When the officers of a church had been chosen, they were publicly ordained or set apart to their work by prayer and the laying on of hands.

The Apostles, however, sometimes laid hands on persons for the purpose of imparting to them special spiritual gifts (Acts viii. 17; xix. 6; 1 Tim. i. 6). Their object may have been to supply the church, in its infancy, with extraordinary teachers, who, under the special illumination of the Spirit, might unfold and enforce those truths of the gospel needed to develop the divine life implanted in the first believers. Such teachers were demanded before the permanent ministry had generally grown up in the churches. When, however, it had been matured, these extraordinary teachers passed away.

Now, we must carefully distinguish between the imposition of hands through which these extraordinary spiritual gifts were bestowed, and the laying on of hands by which a person was solemnly set apart as a permanent officer of a Christian church. From failing to make this distinction, men have fallen into erroneous notions concerning ordination. They have held that some special sanctity and power was communicated by the imposition of hands.* But we have no evidence that special spiritual gifts

* When one is ordained as a priest in the Church of England, the bishop, who lays on hands with the priests present, says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands; whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

were bestowed by any except the Apostles. Even in the case of Timothy, who, at the time of ordination, received some *charism*, Paul laid on hands with the eldership (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6). If such gifts were conferred by Apostles alone, it is vain to infer from their acts, as they have no successors in the apostleship, that some special virtue is now imparted to one who receives ordination by the laying on of hands. Still more inconclusive does such an inference appear when we notice that there is no evidence that even the Apostles imparted to permanent church officers, by the imposition of hands, simply as an act of ordination, any spiritual gift or power that they did not already possess at the time, or by virtue of their election (Acts vi. 6; xiv. 23). Their ordination was simply a public inauguration. Its benefit consisted in the prayer of faith offered for the divine blessing to descend on those who were thus solemnly set apart to their work. The laying on of hands was the fitting symbol of the bestowment, in answer to the prayer, of ordinary spiritual influences, and it also emphatically pointed out the ordained, in the presence of the community, as a church officer.

1. By whom, in the apostolic churches, was the act of ordination performed?

(*a.*) By Apostles (Acts vi. 6; xiv. 23; 2 Tim. i. 6).

(*b.*) By evangelists (1 Tim. v. 22). This passage may refer, as some contend, to the laying on of hands at the time of baptism; but the better view is, that it refers especially to ordination. The appointment of elders in Crete, by Titus, seems to include ordination (Tit. i. 5).

(*c.*) By presbyteries or elderships (1 Tim. iv. 14). This presbytery was not the modern presbytery, as is sometimes assumed, but the elders of a single church.

(*d.*) It should, however, always be borne in mind, that the power to ordain permanent church officers resides exclusively in the churches. If bishops or elders perform the act of ordination, they do it as the agents and representatives of the church over which the persons ordained by them are placed. To elect an officer is a greater act than to ordain him; if, then, a church has power to do the former, it certainly has to do the latter. Whenever, therefore, a church is destitute of elders, and is unable to call

in any for counsel, it may designate some suitable persons of its own membership to ordain its elders or deacons. This view is confirmed by Acts xiii. 1–3, where the church, through certain prophets and teachers, is represented as setting apart Barnabas and Saul to missionary work among the Gentiles, by the laying on of hands.

Ought we, then, to invite councils to ordain pastors? This is, no doubt, a commendable custom, since it promotes the fellowship of the churches, and tends to guard the purity of doctrine; but we should never forget that such a council is strictly subordinate to the church that calls it, and acts only by its request.

2. Who, under the direction of the Apostles, were ordained? Elders, evangelists, and deacons (Acts xiv. 23; 1 Tim. iv. 14; Tit. i. 5; Acts vi. 6). In a similar manner men were set apart to any given work (Acts xiii. 1–3), unless we regard the ordination set before us in this passage, as that of the Apostles. (See Jacob's Eccl. Pol. of the N. T. p. 110.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE POWERS OF CHURCH OFFICERS.

Since, in apostolic times, the churches, as independent bodies, elected their own officers, admitted and disciplined their own members, in short, performed every judicial and executive act which pertained to their well-being and duties, it is clear that local pastors, who were members of the churches over which they were placed, had no power, by virtue of their office, to rule their churches arbitrarily. They could effect their purposes only through the churches. It is true that the names by which they were designated is sufficient evidence of their prominence in the churches. That 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5, v. 17, and Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24, according to the common English version, seem to teach that they possessed the power to rule independently of the churches is admitted; but, when we examine the Greek, we find no vestige of such power. The word in 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5, translated "rule," means simply to preside over. The Apostle reasons, that if a man lacks the elements of character which fit him to preside well over his household, he is unfit to take care of the church; but "the presiding over the household" does not seem to imply arbitrary rule; the means by which one presides *well*, so that his children are in decorous subjection, are not pointed out. Yet, as Paul has just been insisting that a bishop must be pure in character, the most obvious conclusion is, that his children will be in subjection through the natural force of such a character; the subjection, in that case, would be voluntary and hearty on the part of the children, and hence of a higher, nobler type than if it were arbitrarily enforced. Moreover, when the Apostle passes from the family to the church, he changes the verb for one which signifies to take care of, and that with diligence and solicitude. Xenophon (Mem. of Soc. Bk. I. c. 1, § 19) uses it, when he says that Socrates "thought that the gods care for, or take care of, men;" and Luke (x. 35) to express the care of the good Samari-

tan for him who fell among thieves. That presiding over the church, in the sense of directing its affairs, is involved in the care of it, is, doubtless, true, but this is not the aspect in which the case is here presented; but the bishop, with diligence and solicitude, is to care for all the members of the church over which he presides, seeking to promote their highest interests. If his character be such that his children cheerfully submit to him, the church, for whose good he self-sacrificingly labors, will, probably, also show to him all needful deference; but if, through the force of his character and position as the recognized head of the household, he is unable to secure within it fitting obedience and order, he is certainly unfit to undertake the more difficult task of caring for the church.

In v. 17, Paul speaks of elders who preside over a church well, as worthy of special honor. Judging from the succeeding verse, we should conclude that the special way in which the churches were expected to express their esteem for such elders was by providing for them an adequate support. There is, however, in the passage nothing which implies that elders possess, by virtue of their office, arbitrary power to direct and control those over whom they are placed.*

When we turn to Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24, we find that the word translated in our version "rule," means simply "leaders;" and, instead of "Remember them which have the rule over you," we read, "Remember those who were your leaders;" "Obey those who are your leaders, and submit" (verse 17), and "Salute all who are your leaders" (verse 24).

It may be said that the exhortation to obey your leaders implies the right, on their part, to command; but the word translated "obey" may more fittingly be rendered "follow," or "assent to." Yet, if it means obey, the writer does not hint that the Hebrews were to obey because their pastors had the right, on account of their official position, to command. His thought is (1), they

* Some think that προΐστημι means to take the lead (Tit. iii. 8, 14). In these passages such a sense is certainly very fitting, and hence worthy of consideration; but "practice" is probably the correct rendering. Yet the other sense suggestively connects 1 Tim. iii. 5, v. 17 with Heb. xiii. 7.

are your acknowledged leaders, hence it is fitting that you should follow them; (2), such is their character and labor that it is reasonable that you should yield yourselves to their guidance; submit to them, "for they watch for your souls as those that must give account."

1 Pet. v. 3 is the only passage in the New Testament which distinctly affirms anything concerning the arbitrary rule of elders; and in it they are forbidden to be lords over the heritages or portions, i. e., the churches. (See Huther in loc.)

Nor have Christian pastors any power, by virtue of their office, to decide what their churches shall believe. The Apostles addressed their doctrinal epistles to the entire membership of the churches, but did not arbitrarily command them to accept the truth, but endeavored to persuade them so to do. They exhorted them to withstand the errors promulgated by false teachers (Gal. v. 1), to put to the test whatever might be taught, and to hold fast only what was good (1 Thess. v. 21). Paul commended the Bereans for scrutinizing even his own teaching, that they might know whether it was the truth (Acts xvii. 11); and we may certainly know, since an inspired Apostle declared that he had no dominion over the faith of his brethren (2 Cor. i. 24), that ordinary pastors have none.

There is, finally, one irrefragable argument against the exercise of arbitrary power on the part of a pastor. It is this: if he commands, he has no means of enforcing obedience; to accomplish his purposes he must work through the entire body of his church; without the consent of the majority he is powerless. If Christ had given him the right of arbitrary command, he also would have provided the means by which the commands given might be enforced.

Yet the Apostles taught the churches to treat their elders with deference and honor, since, on account of a special fitness for the pastoral office, they had been chosen to be leaders. So long as they did nothing to forfeit the esteem in which they were held when chosen, those under their care were, at least, morally bound to follow their leadership. Moreover, when they devoted themselves with assiduity to the work of preaching, it became the duty of the churches to honor them as the ambassadors of Christ, sent

by him to proclaim his word. The benefits conferred through their labors furnished an additional reason why those, over whom they were placed, should follow their guidance (1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Phil. ii. 29, 30). We conclude, therefore, that the authority of a pastor rests alone on his relation to Christ, the message which he proclaims, and the purity of his character. If he is true to himself, to the church, and to Christ, there will be spontaneously accorded to him all the authority which he can safely wield.

The authority of deacons rests on the same basis; but, as they are not public teachers, other things being equal, their authority is not the same in degree. Yet Paul affirms that when they use their office well, they purchase for themselves a good degree (1 Tim. iii. 13); they acquire standing and influence on account of which the church voluntarily looks up to them as guides.

This view of the powers of church officers is in strict conformity with the spirit of the gospel, which tends to obliterate all artificial distinctions, which declares that men are one in Christ Jesus, bids us in honor to prefer one another, and teaches that if any one would be great among us, he must become the servant of all.

If we turn to the New Testament, we find no such distinction between the churches and their officers as men are often now accustomed to make. If it is the main duty of elders to preach, the laymen are expected, according to their opportunities, to publish the glad tidings. If the great object of the Christian ministry is to edify the body of Christ (Eph. iv. 12), the ordinary members of the church are called upon "to edify one another" (1 Thess. v. 11). If the churches are commanded to honor their pastors (1 Thess. v. 13), their pastors are just as positively commanded not to lord it over them (1 Pet. v. 3). If the Hebrew Christians are exhorted to submit to their leaders (Heb. xiii. 17), the church at Corinth is called on to submit to the household of Stephanas, and to every one who helped the Apostle and his coadjutors in their work of preaching the gospel (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16). The word translated submit, in the latter passage, is much stronger than the one so rendered in the former passage, and there is no evidence that those to whom the Corinthians are called upon to submit were church offi-

cers; in fact, the requirement in verse 16 is so broad as to include even the women who often labored with Paul (Phil. iv. 3).

"In some of the Epistles, churches are addressed and admonished without any notice at all being taken of their ministers, who remain undistinguished in the general body, as in Romans and Galatians. In some the presence of ministers is acknowledged, but only with a passing allusion, if any, to the nature of their office, as in Ephesians and Philippians. In one, a message is sent to a minister, *through the church*, bidding him 'take heed to his ministry, that he fulfil it,' as in Colossians. In another, presbyters are warned not to assume too high an authority by lording it over their people, as in the First of Peter. Yet all this is not without a distinct acknowledgment of the respect which was due to them. For churches are expressly bidden to revere and obey them." (Jacob's Eccl. Pol. of the New Testament, p. 152.)

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

HAVING endeavored to point out the main features of the church polity presented to us in the Acts and the Epistles, we may profitably notice, —

1. That it worked admirably during the apostolic era, and till, at least, the middle of the second century, when it began to yield to corrupting influences. Though the churches were made up of converted Jews and Gentiles, whose prejudices against each other were naturally very strong, yet this simple polity was found amply sufficient for every exigency. Paul boldly laid the entire responsibility of disciplining its own members on the disorderly church at Corinth, and without the interference of any authority from without, its immoralities and contentions were removed (1 Ep. Clement cc. 1, 2). And in modern times, churches, formed and governed after the apostolic model, have flourished in different countries and under the most diverse governments and civilizations.

2. If the polity of the New Testament churches had been rigidly maintained, there never could have been any alliance of Church and State. For this polity repels all interference from without, either ecclesiastical or civil, and spurns all power proffered for the accomplishment of its work except that delegated by Christ himself.

3. It strips church officers of all adventitious prominence and importance, and lifts up and honors the whole church as the agency through which the gospel is to be disseminated. It lays upon it the responsibility of Christian labor, and thus develops its inherent strength. If, in the first centuries, this polity had been adhered to, sacerdotalism could never have gained a foothold in Christendom.

4. It sacredly guards the right of private judgment, and the freedom of the conscience. It calls upon men to decide for them-

selves every question of personal duty including that of baptism. And as it acknowledges Christ as the only lawgiver, it permits no man, or class of men, to override the decisions of individual churches. For this reason, churches formed on the apostolic model, wherever planted, are embodied protests against all forms of tyranny, ecclesiastical or civil.

5. It tends to render the churches intelligent in the Scriptures. They are called upon to determine for themselves questions of doctrine and discipline, and this sends them constantly to their statute-book, the New Testament.

6. It saves the church at large from agitation by cases of discipline, which are generally wholly settled within the churches where they originate. If they ever extend beyond such narrow limits, it is when an advisory council is called; but as the decisions of such councils are not absolutely binding and a finality, the interest awakened by their decisions, in the churches, is always evanescent.

We must, however, ever bear in mind, that New Testament church polity was provided for the truly regenerate. When the piety of independent churches is wholly gone, the churches themselves almost necessarily become extinct. It requires no external force to remove such candlesticks out of their places. Their destruction in such circumstances is provided for by the necessary action of the principles on which they are constructed, and by which, so long as they retain the spirit of Christ, they are developed and made efficient for good. And just in proportion to the worldliness and godlessness of professed churches of Christ, does any polity under which they are placed, not excepting that of the New Testament, become weak and inoperative. The churches, then, must be careful to admit none into their communion except believers, and to maintain a thorough and healthful discipline. If these duties are faithfully performed, the church polity of the New Testament will be found best adapted to secure the great objects for which churches were established by Christ and his Apostles, viz.; the sanctification of believers and the conversion of the world.

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.